argosy

A NEW DYLAN THOMAS

and 12 brilliant stories

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OVER NOW TO YOU...

THE news that a farmer at Balmoral, Australia, has been granted an Income Tax deduction of forty pounds towards the keep of his tractor-driving monkey, Johnnie Schmidt—to cover sandwiches, tinned apricots, and soft drinks—is going to make for a lot of complications in the labour world. What about unions? What about national insurance, luncheon-vouchers, overtime, sick benefit? This country alone must teem with employers of animals who aren't filling in the necessary forms.

For instance there's the Mr. Palmer in Hertfordshire whose two boa-constrictors, Fred and Jim—totalling fourteen feet of boa-constrictor between them—act as night-watchmen and give burglars an unhappy time . . . Mr. Palmer may avoid the snags; our Uncle Wal was less lucky.

Proprietor of a nice little jeweller's and clock-repair business in Hounslow, Uncle Wal kept two pythons, Bert and Millicent, to look after the stock at night. Wal lived over the shop but was rather deaf and had suffered a lot from thefts. He claimed fifty pounds a year tax allowance on each to cover their keep; pythons are expensive eaters. For months all went well; Bert caught three burglars, Millie two. Then trouble began.

First the Ministry of National Insurance got wind of the matter and demanded a fearful sum in back contributions; then the Inland Revenue wanted to know why Uncle Wal had not been filling in P.A.Y.E. forms in respect of his employees.

Because they weren't paid in cash, Uncle Wal said.

Instantly the Janitors', Commissionaires' and Night-watchmen's Union sent a delegation to point out Bert and Millie were scab labour unless they joined and were paid union rates.

Unfortunately the delegation called at night, and Millie mistook them for watch-thieves; there was a regrettable scene. Things were patched up and the pythons joined the union, which

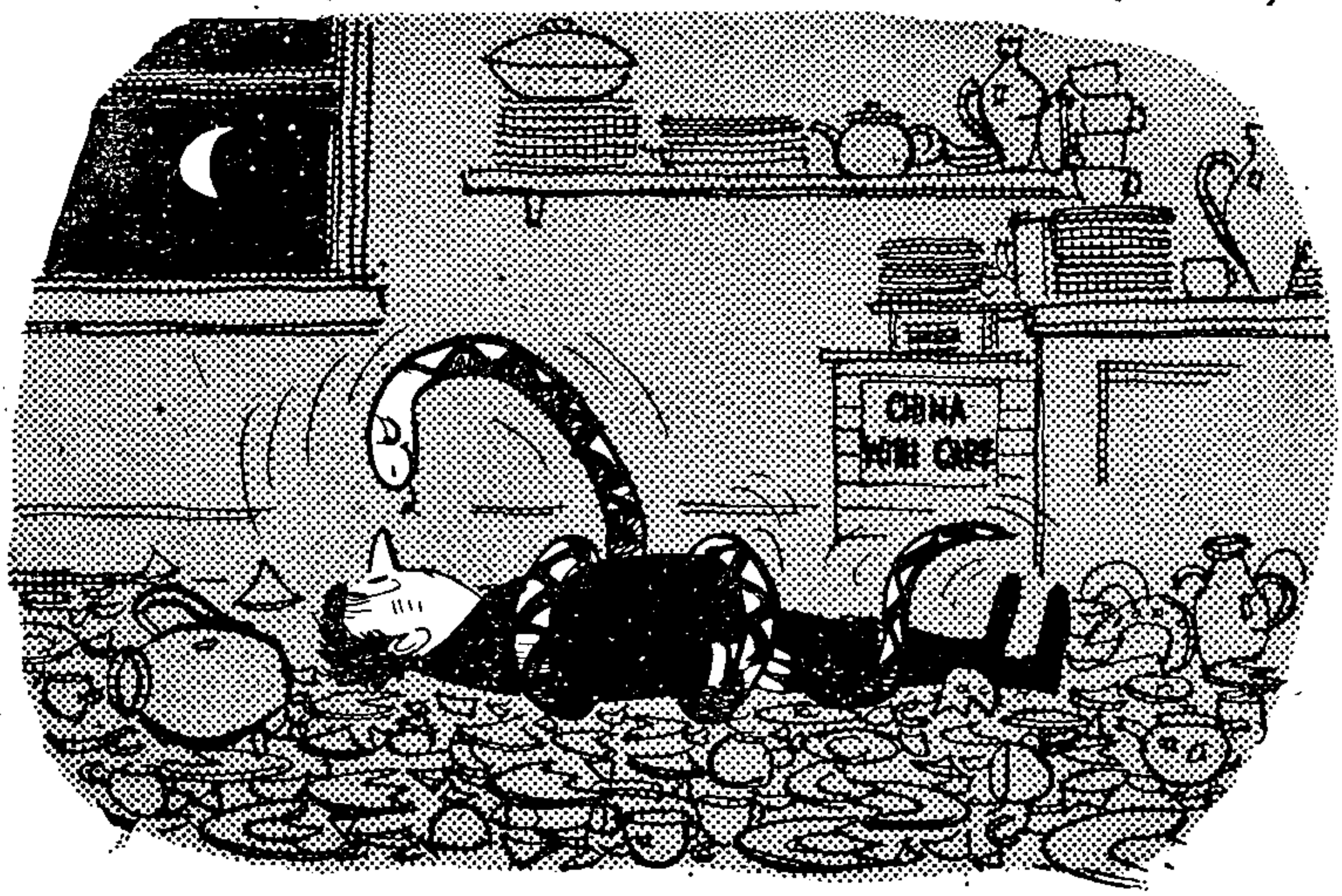
demanded better working conditions for them—tea-breaks and outdoor recreational facilities. Uncle Wal installed a Kittiephlap in the door so the pythons could slip into the back yard; actually they did not care for the outdoor English climate but Millie spent a lot of time sparrow-gazing with her head just poked through the flap. Burglars were rare, now, and she was bored.

One night she saw a man shin up the back guttering of the shop next door. She was after him in a flash: gutters were ABC to Millie. She had sizzled in the window, thrown a noose round the man and hogtied him in a couple of half-nelsons before he knew what had got him and could shout for help. There was a bit of a struggle, of course; it was a pity this took place in the storeroom of a china shop. It was bad luck, too, that the man Millie caught was the proprietor, who had left his latchkey in his other trousers.

His claim for damages amounted to something substantial; at the same time the National Union of Housebreakers was sueing Uncle Wal for unfair methods of apprehension; and the Town Council were trying to put Uncle Wal's rates up because his employees slept in. There was only one thing to do . . .

At the moment Bert and Millie are lodging at the Argosy offices. They lick stamps, tie parcels, and work the duplicator. But recreational facilities are not ideal; Millie is becoming bored. We have trouble with visitors. If any reader will offer a home to two pythons—both fully paid-up union members—a year's subscription to Argosy will be thrown in with them, free.

The Back-room Boys



THE SHEIK AND MISS DIANA NAYLOR-TAYLOR

BY GERALD SPARROW

THE abduction of a British débutante these days may seem an anachronistic and, indeed, a superfluous proceeding, but there are cases in which the abduction is prompted not, as formerly, to secure the lady's fortune, but to secure her nice, white body, the gentleman concerned being of a different race and faith and anxious to acquire for his harem a young lady of refinement, brought up in the best British traditions that so often result in considerable passion simmering beneath a cool exterior.

Such was the case of the Sheik Abdullah Al Hashir and Diana Naylor-Taylor, which I came across in my journeys to the black tents of the Bedouin that stretch from Jordan into Saudi Arabia.

In this account I have changed the names of the characters concerned to protect, as they say, the innocent.

Do you know Claridge's Hotel, London? It is a quietly superior establishment. It looks down on the newer innovations, such as the Dorchester and the garish Hilton in Park Lane. Claridge's is British, and proud of it. The staff are quiet, deferential, tactful, efficient, completely aware that in its way this is the best hotel in the world.

Once, staying a few days in New York at a famous hotel, I witnessed there an altercation between the maître d'hôtel and one of his waiters, carried on in the uncouth English of the American immigrants. It startled me. Such a scene would be inconceivable at Claridge's. Kings come and go here, like other men. Queens rustle through the foyer with only a murmur of ladies-in-waiting. At cocktail parties the silver trays of savouries are at once replenished as soon as gaps appear in their offering, so that no guest may feel that he is being offered a half-empty

dish. It is on little details such as this that Claridge's relies for its prodigious reputation.

Mrs. Naylor-Taylor never quite discovered why she received that disastrous invitation from the Arabian Embassy to a cocktail party to celebrate the signing of the non-aggression pact between Arabia and the Republic of Turkey. It may have been because her brother, who had just died, had been a consul-general in Arabia, and the name of Naylor-Taylor lingered on in the diplomatic lists of the embassy, which were revised reluctantly.

However, the invitation arrived.

His Excellency requests the pleasure of Mrs. Naylor-Taylor's company on Friday the 16*th of October at Claridge's Hotel.*

Cocktails: 6 *to* 8 *p.m.*

It asked for a reply to the private secretary.

Mrs. Naylor-Taylor replied as desired and in the third person. She accepted. Then, when the day arrived, she said to her daughter, " Good God, I've got to go to this lousy embassy cocktail do. I shan't know a person there. Diana, you must come with me . . ."

" Oh, Mummy, this is your mess. You accepted. They didn't even ask me. It will be bloody awful."

" Get ready, child. I have an idea . . ."

The idea that had occurred to Mrs. Naylor-Taylor was that there was oil in Arabia, and that this oil was largely owned by legendary figures like Mr. Paul Getty, who might well be at this party, mixing business with pleasure, pouring a little champagne on the troubled waters of Anglo-Arabian relations.

These oil magnates, if one were to believe the press reports, were always marrying, and after finding that they could not accommodate themselves to the partner of the moment they invariably settled smacking sums of money on the relinquished lady.

Mrs. Naylor-Taylor was not unduly mercenary, but life had taught her that money, though it cannot buy happiness, can act as a very effective buffer against the asperities of life. Diana had been a difficult girl. Hailed three years before as débutante of the year, she had fallen in love with a negro cabaret entertainer, a married duke, and a knighted actor whom, on the face of it, one would have thought had strong homosexual inclinations. Enough was enough, Mrs. Naylor-Taylor thought. If this kind of thing were to continue Diana would end up in a mess, and Mrs. Naylor-Taylor hated messes.

Much better if Diana were now to marry a very wealthy man, even if some years her senior—well, old enough to be her father if you insist—and, when the marriage came to a graceful conclusion, extract a comfortable fortune. She could then afford to remarry whom she chose, could have her lovers and generally enjoy herself, and Mrs. Naylor-Taylor would have done her duty as a devoted, sophisticated mother.

So they both turned up at the Arabian embassy. The ambassador seemed delighted to see Diana as well as Mama.

"I have brought along my daughter, Your Excellency. She is so interested in the East."

"You do us an honour, madame. May I not get you both a glass of champagne?"

Really, these Arabs were very civilised. Quite charming in their approach. They seemed to know what a woman wanted. What Mrs. Naylor-Taylor and Diana wanted at that moment was a full, chilled glass of vintage champagne, followed immediately by the other half. As soon as this little ceremony had been accomplished, Diana said to her mother, "I'm feeling fine, Mama. I'm going to engage a sheik in conversation."

So saying, she dived into the multitude in the second salon and was lost to sight.

Mrs. Naylor-Taylor made a more leisurely progress of the rooms and, contrary to her expectation, came across quite a number of people she knew. She met her cousin, the Under-Secretary, whom she disliked.

"Hullo, George," she said, "have you defected yet?"

The thinnest of wry smiles greeted this sally, but it failed to reach its target, for Mrs. Naylor-Taylor had passed on, and was chatting gaily with the Indian ambassadress, with whom she had been at school.

Meanwhile, Diana had given the second salon a seemingly casual but actually careful scrutiny. Who was the man here? Who was the young man who had those qualities of sartorial elegance, sex and élan that Miss Naylor-Taylor admired? Then she saw him. He was standing alone, munching a sausage and sipping his champagne, contemplating.

He was beautifully dressed; probably, Diana thought, by Gieves. She was sure he bought his pyjamas, or, rather, had them created, by Vardin et Patou. She was right. She edged her way towards his corner, and in so doing spilt a little of her wine.

"Oh, how stupid of me!"

"Not at all. It has enabled us to meet. I am most lucky."

"I'm Diana Naylor-Taylor."

"And I am Sheik Abdullah."

"I've never met a sheik before," said Diana.

"You've met one now," Abdullah replied.

The Sheik Abdullah was not only a personable young man. He was also wealthy. He was a distant cousin of the Emir, and he fell for Diana.

That autumn the Sheik Abdullah took the delightful Miss Naylor-Taylor everywhere in his cream-and-gold convertible. Just before Christmas he had to fly back to Arabia. He asked Diana to come too.

"As what?"

"Well, come and see, first. Then, if you like my country, we can marry."

"Flattered, sir. I'll think it over."

So Abdullah returned to his charming chalet in the desert and the black tents of his people. He continued to administer the extensive agricultural estates of his father, but he could not forget Diana.

In the spring he was back in Britain in his private plane. He rang Diana as soon as he had booked in at Claridge's.

"It's me, Diana . . ."

"Abdullah! Why, what are you doing in Britain?"

"I've come to get you. Come to Le Touquet with me on Friday. I have my own plane."

"I haven't a thing to wear . . ."

"I wish that were true."

"O.K. Where do we meet?"

"Gatwick, nine o'clock. Don't be late. We have to take off on schedule."

Mrs. Naylor-Taylor was a little disturbed when she learnt what her daughter intended to do. "Do be careful, darling. These dagoes have the most curious capabilities. I mean, it may all be great fun, but don't have a baby . . ."

"Oh, Mother, how not-with-it can you get!"

The plane of Sheik Abdullah was larger than Diana expected, and it had four engines, but then if one were rich enough why should one grope about in a Moth? This aircraft, with its blue-and-gold fittings, its cocktail cabinet, and its luxurious little bedroom, was very much more comfortable; and, of course, Abdullah had flown all the way from Raz, the city near his father's estates.

At eleven o'clock Diana said, "Abdullah, why haven't we arrived?"

Abdullah looked at her. "I have to plead guilty to a tiny deceit, my love. We are going to Arabia . . ."

"I am being abducted?"

"Not, I hope, against your will?"

"We shall see about that," said Diana. "It depends on how things turn out."

Things did not turn out too badly for Diana. She had a satisfying love affair with her young man, and so prudent was she that there were no awkward consequences. Abdullah was really rather a dear. She found he was quite a different person in his own country. She was mistaken in thinking that he was Westernised.

When she teased him about being more at home in Mayfair than he was in the desert, he took her out to live for a week in the black tents of his father's Bedouin, changing his London suit for Arab costume—and very dashing he looked in his white robes and kafear with the gold, sheik's dagger at his belt.

Diana was introduced to Abdullah's father, the Sheik Mustafa, a formidable old gentleman with forty thousand armed men at his command. Mustafa's command of English was limited, but he usually managed to make his meaning clear.

"Welcome, my daughter. You a good girl at home?"

"Yes, Sheik."

"Good family?"

"Not too bad."

"What means this not too bad?"

"Quite good."

"Ah! You like my son?"

"Not too bad."

"Quite good?"

"Very nice indeed."

The old sheik took a fancy to Diana.

For six weeks it was bliss. Abdullah rode with her as their people moved, stretching out over the barren lands, from water to water. They even ate locusts, roasted; a delicate undertaking. They drove into Raz, and dined at the British Club, and danced at a night-club.

Diana spent several evenings with the Bedouin women, quite lovely some of them, not veiled, but as shy as hares in March. They had endless curiosity. Had she had men in Britain? How did Englishmen make love? Did they beat their wives? Was it permissible to enjoy a man? And so on. They talked until the stars came out low and brilliant, and the heat of the day vanished before the cool breeze of night.

At first Diana toyed with the idea of marrying Abdullah; but she postponed a decision. She had given up all idea of objecting to her abduction. She had been tricked, but nicely. After all, trickery was an old Arab custom, and it was complimentary in a way . . .

Then a dreadful thing began to happen. Diana started to get bored. She got bored with the desert, bored with the black tents, bored with Abdullah's pretentious little villa, even bored with the lovely desert nights, and old Sheik Mustafa. She wanted more than anything to hear a nightingale singing in Berkeley Square or, if that were no longer possible, a kettle singing on an electric cooker. She wanted to have muffins for tea, and morning papers, and to see again spring in the parks.

How could she possibly tell Abdullah this? But she did, very sweetly and tactfully.

To her surprise he took it very well. "If you must you must," he said, and added that he wished to settle twenty thousand pounds on her. This he did by draft through the Ottoman Bank.

The night she left, Sheik Mustafa sent for his son, "The young woman has gone?"

"Yes, Father. She never suspected that I was tired of the affair. Luckily she became weary of it, and she was the first to make a move . . ."

Next day her mother saw Diana paying off a taxi, and she ran into the hall to meet her. "Tell me, darling, what was it like?"

"It was wonderful, Mama, but terribly expensive!"

★

WHAT of the future of the abductor? Is the abominable crime of kidnapping likely to increase, remain a constant factor or develop new techniques?

It seems safe to say that the criminal fraternity in Britain, in America, and on the continent of Europe are directing their attention chiefly to the gigantic cash-money grab.

This is the most satisfying of crimes—from the criminals' point of view. There is the fortune in notes, or in gold, and there is very little possibility of the notes being traced. However, the development of security services and ingenious bank safety, precautions are attempting to combat the big hold-up.

The money-raider has none of the difficulties that confront the kidnapper. He does not have to cajole; he does not have a screaming baby to feed; he does not have to flirt with murder

in the same evil and deliberate way in which the kidnapper may become involved. So for the time, kidnapping may be on the decline, as the world of crime develops the hold-up to even greater heights.

The old-fashioned abduction appears to be a thing of the past. And, in any event, young ladies are much less abductable than they were. Seduction is not a criminal offence.

The abductions that arise out of the division of the world into two armed camps may well increase. As each side builds up its systems of espionage, the abduction of "defectors" may seem to those who control these strange affairs increasingly a necessity.

Kidnappers are still very severely dealt with, and, of course, if their crime leads to murder, in Britain and in some of the United States, they may hang, enter the gas-chamber, or be electrocuted. Whether the terror that these sanctions inspire is really effective or not is debatable.

Tracing the history of the English criminal law and that of Scotland it can at least be argued that abductors were not deterred by the awful fate that the law insisted should be the penalty for their crime, and it is possible that the more severe the penalty, the more crime flourishes.

Morality and law have to walk, more or less, hand in hand, and if the legal punishments are obviously unsuitable and barbaric they may actually encourage bold men to flout them, knowing that if they do popular opinion will be on their side.

To pursue this argument to its logical conclusion it is worth while looking at the law at a time when, both in its sentences and in its methods of punishment, it was truly horrific.

Nothing could have been more ferocious than the penalties that hung over a transgressor in the Middle Ages. Consider, for instance, this delightful account of the trial of Sir Edmund Knevet for striking Master Clere "within the King's House."

> The 10th of June 1541, Sir Edmund Knevet, knight of Norfolke, was arraigned before the King's Justice, sitting in the great hall at Greenwich, for striking one Master Clere, of Norfolke, servant with the Earle of Surrey, within the King's house on the Tenice court.
>
> At the inquest he was found Guilty, and had Judgement to loose his right hand; whereupon was called to do the execution, first the serjeant chirurgion, with his instrument appertaining to his office; the serjeant of the woodyard with the mallet and a blocke, whereupon the hand should lie; the master cooke for the King with the knife; the serjeant of the larder to set the knife

right on the ioynt; the sergeant farrier with his searing yrons to seare the veines; the sergeant of the poultry with a cocke, which cocke should have his head smitten off vpon the same blocke and with the same knife; the yeoman of the chandry with seare clothes; the yeoman of the scullery with a pan of fire to heat the yrons, a chafer of water to coole the ends of the yrons, and two fourmes for all officers to set their stuffe on: the sergeant of the seller with wine, ale and beere: the yeoman of the ewery in the sergeant's stead, who was absent, with bason, ewre and towels.

Thus every man in his office ready to doe the execution, there was called forth Sir William Pickering, knight marshall, to bring in the said Edmond Knevet, and when hee was brought to the barre, the Chief Justice declared to him his trespasse, and the said Knevet confessing himself to be guilty, humbly submitted him to the King's mercy; for this offence he was not only judged to loose his hand but also his body to remaine in prison, and his landes and goods at the King's pleasure.

Then the sayd Sir Edmond Knevet desired that the King (Henry VIII) of his benigne grace, would pardon him of his right hand and take the left; for (quoth he) if my right hand be spared, I may hereafter doe such good seruice to his grace as shall please him to appoint. Of this submission and request the justices forthwith informed the King, who of his goodness, considering the gentleheart of the said Edmond, and the good report of lords and ladies, granted him pardon, that he should loose neither hand, land nor goods, but should go free at liberty.

Yet, in spite of these horrific threats of punishment, brawling went on in the royal palaces until Albert the Good did away with all that kind of thing.

Not only were the punishments as abominable as the crimes, but the instruments by which they were effected were calculated to send a chill of horror down the spines of the victims. This is the description of the instrument called *The Maiden*.

This machine of death is now destroyed; but I saw one of the same kind in a room under the Parliament-house in Edinburgh, where it was introduced by the Regent Morton, who took a model of it as he passed through Halifax, and at length suffered by it himself.

It is a form of painter's easel, and about ten feet high; at four feet from the bottom is the crossbar on which the felon lays his head, which is kept down by another placed above. In the inner edges of the frame are grooves; in these is placed a sharp axe, with a vast weight of lead, supported at the very summit with a a peg; to that peg is fastened a cord, which the executioner cutting,-the axe falls, and does the affair effectually, without suffering the unhappy criminal to undergo a repetition of strokes, as in the common method.

I am one of those who believe that the biblical approach to punishment, the approach of the Old Testament, opposed essentially to that of the New Testament, is no longer the final solution. I am sure that nothing except a gradual change of the moral and social climate will eradicate crime, even the crime of abduction we have been discussing.

When I was writing of the great swindlers, impostors, and forgers, I felt from time to time a sympathy with these ingenious rogues which the critics commented upon. I cannot feel the same sympathy for abductors. But to me they are intensely interesting, and I hope that I have shared that interest with you.

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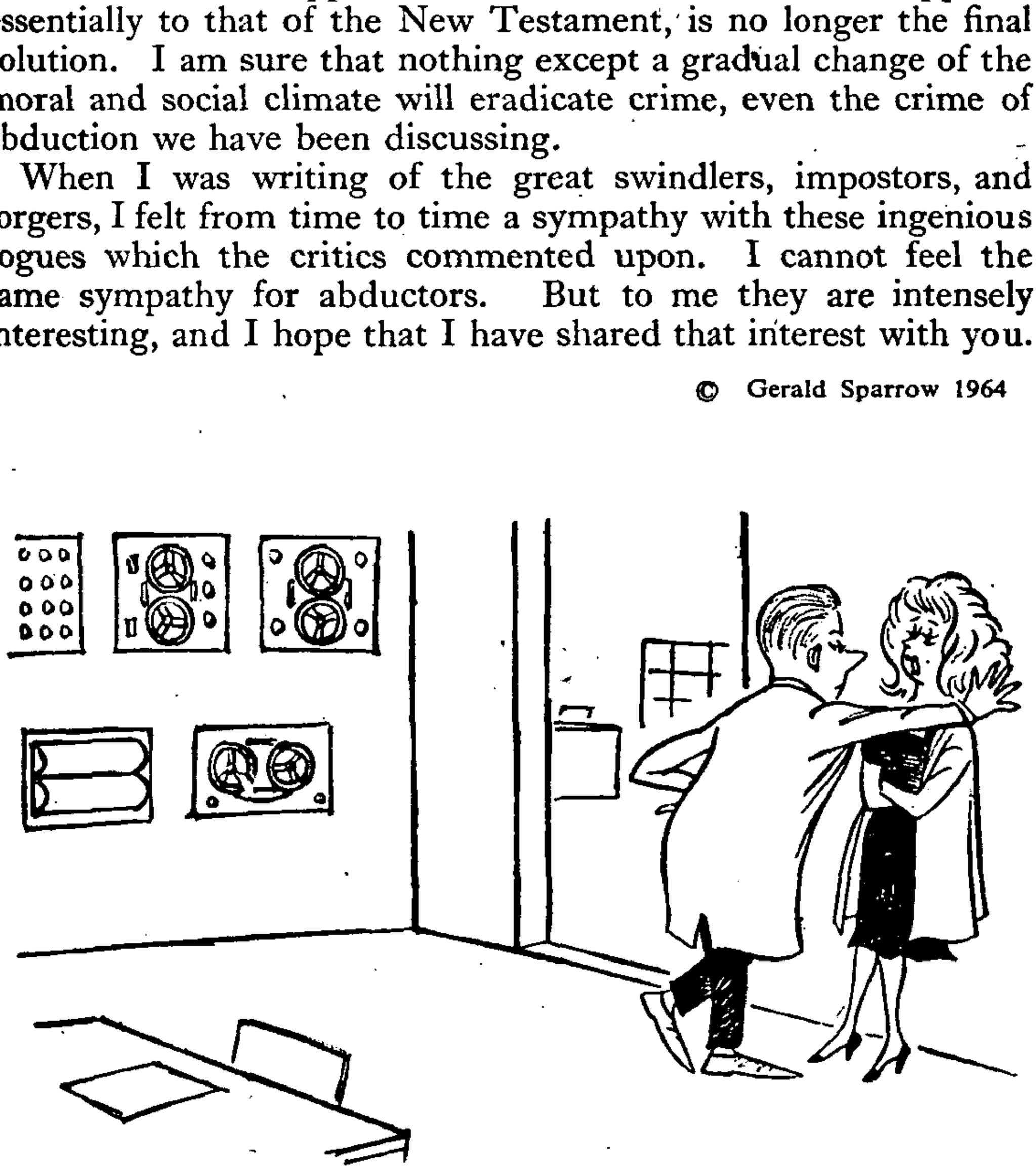

" I'm sorry, William. I ran you through the computer last night, and you just didn't make it."

She tweaked the coverlet from him . . .

HEAVENLY CONDESCENSION

BY LESLIE BONNET

THE Abbot of The Temple of Heavenly Condescension, The Most Clear, The Holy One, Lo, knew the nine parts of his dream almost before it had begun. It was a dream he had had once before.

It was the second watch of the night. A declining moon, falling out of a frosty sky, flung a shaft of light through the window of his cell to splash against the black door.

In this torrent of radiance her abundant body glowed palely where the moonlight spilt over it. Above and below, it smouldered like yellow jade.

The abbot knew well who this lady was. He had known her intimately; in that former dream. This was Hsi Wang Mu, The Golden Mother of the Tortoise, Sovereign of the Western Air, Goddess of Femininity.

Civility would have demanded, even in slumber, that the abbot leap from his bed to perform the obeisances proper to the Heavenly Visitor's status. But that was what The Holy One, Lo, had hastened to do on the previous occasion, now a year since. It had been an alacrity which he had quickly regretted because, before he had had time to prostrate himself, he had been seized and embroiled in unaccustomed and humiliating activities of a dignity-denying kind. That experience, now, seemed only to have happened yesterday. Lo had a sharp remembrance of the subsequent awakening, hot, distressed and remorseful.

So, this time, The Most Clear held the padded cotton coverlet firmly under his chin, so that only his lean face was visible, and watched, as it seemed to him, with implacable suspicion as the too-playful Goddess moved towards him. He was conscious of a determination to prevent the sequence of the events of last year's dream being repeated. To this end he gave himself,

under the coverlet, a shrewd pinch upon his lean flank. Then, assured of awakening, he opened his eyes to their widest.

For a moment he stared, while a shiver of alarm seized him. The attention-compelling figure of the Goddess still swayed in the moonbeams.

This was impossible. Lo, The Most Clear, was now staring-eyed awake. That old distressful dream was one thing. It had been the work, doubtless, of Evil Spirits ever alert to embarrass one who sought by strict austerity and the undeviating pursuit of the Middle Way to attain a place on the Register of the Immortals maintained by The Immortal Youth and the Jade Maiden.

That other occasion had, without doubt, been a very general visitation by Evil Spirits. It had been total. The abbot, wan and nearly whimpering on the sorry morning after the violent night, had been made certain by the hangdog looks of the better sort of monk and the complacent expressions of the worse that he had not been alone in dreaming so unpardonably.

But how could this be now—that he should be lying awake with the woman Goddess, Hsi Wang Mu, in his cell, swaying there in the pale light, and breathing so eagerly that the warm sound made his ears pound? Why was not the Embodiment of Yin, the Female Essence, securely set on her pedestal in the Hall of the Gods on the temple terrace above, where she had stood for so many hundreds of years?

How ardently The Holy One, Lo, wished that she were still there, firmly set, radiant—where it mattered not—amongst those scores of gods who scowled and laughed, drew grim brows together or gnashed fearful teeth in that dim-lit hall.

He could see, in horrid imagination, the empty space that must be there now between Chao, one of the Four Heavenly Kings, brandishing his two swords, and Tou Mu, Goddess of the North Star, six-armed and seated upon her Lotus Throne.

As a statue, Hsi Wang Mu's face always bore a smile of mocking wisdom. Over her head and shoulders hung a scarf of lightest blue. Her tunic was of canna red; and a skirt of white silk hid her tiny feet. There, in her proper place, she was an object of veneration. For her here, now, Lo could feel nothing but dread. Here, Hsi Wang Mu's expression was almost a wanton smirk. The lofty smile was gone. And not only the lofty smile was gone. Where, oh where, was the scarf where the red tunic, where, even, the white skirt?

Hsi Wang Mu was gliding towards him. Her lily feet being

improper objects of regard, Lo resolutely fixed his eyes on dimpled knees.

Even if prudence had not dictated a rigidity of posture, Lo could not have leapt from his couch to prostrate himself for very terror.

He forced himself to speak. "Most High," he managed, "my poor cell is no fitting place for your reception."

Hsi Wang Mu was standing now by his couch-side. As she leaned over him, Lo shut his eyes.

"What other place does The Most Clear suggest?" asked a voice that sounded like the gurgle of a clear spring in a parched land.

The abbot groaned, and opened his eyes again. What a delectable sight greeted them it is all too easy to imagine . . . Desperately he tried to redirect his thoughts. This sweet lady, he reminded himself, was many thousands of years old. Why, her birthday is celebrated in her palace in the high mountains of K'un-lun only once every three thousand years when the Magic Peach Tree puts forth its fruit. She has, he urged to himself, nine sons and twenty-four daughters.

Such admonitions were in vain. Those breasts, like peaches on a summer wall, that exquisite face, half laughing, half weeping, wholly eager, were as young as life itself.

The Goddess still awaited Lo's answer. But he dared not speak.

With a deft, impatient movement, Hsi Wang Mu tweaked the coverlet from off the cowering abbot. Lo clung to it frantically. Surprisingly strong, Hsi Wang Mu continued to pull. In the space of a moment the coverlet, with the abbot upon it, was on the floor. Hsi Wang Mu added herself to the heap in one graceful swoop.

Alas for the pursuit of Immortality; alas for the rejection of luxury and greed. No one, chancing to enter the cell of The Most Clear on that rapturously busy night, could have imagined that its occupant had forsworn earthly delights. The sounds of it alone were as if two tigers had ado with one another. Such were the growls, the lashings of limbs, and the whimpers. The moon had swung down beyond the heaped mountain peaks, and the cell was dark before Lo was able to clamber back on to his hard couch and seek a little slumber.

When morning broke his troubled sleep, the abbot rose, trembling and pale. At the early meal he cast glances this way and that. But he could see no indication on the faces of the priests about him of disturbed rest.

This in no way reassured him. A year before, the entire monastery had, apparently, been assailed. It seemed that a year's respite had been gained thereby. Would last night's activity suffice Hsi Wang Mu for another year? Lo shook his head in doubt.

Nervously, during the still afternoon, Lo ventured into the Hall of the Gods. It was utterly quiet in there. Nothing, nobody, moved. The Golden Mother, Hsi Wang Mu, was motionless on her pedestal. Lo stole a look at her as he passed by. There was no flicker of recognition on that flawless face; nor, he noted sadly, any sign of fatigue.

It can be imagined with what misgiving the abbot sought his cell that night. He had thought of changing quarters on some pretext with some lowly brother. But reflection told him that flight would not avail him and that if commotion was to be made it were better that it were made in the comparative seclusion of the cell set apart for The Holy One.

A little later than the night before, perhaps because she awaited the moon's light, there was Hsi Wang Mu approaching the abbot's bed. The unhappy man was beside himself. Flinging reverence and fear aside, he shouted through gritted teeth, "Begone Lady Mother of the Tortoise! Know that I am set apart from lewdness. Begone!"

His teeth began to chatter when he had uttered these impious words. But he need not have feared heavenly anger. The Lady Mother of the Tortoise, fluttering towards him with little, pattering feet, spoke also through teeth that chattered, in a most plaintive way.

"Good Lo," she cried tearfully, "I feel a dread coldness in this high mountain air. I freeze, almost. Feel this hand."

Into the reluctant hand of Lo crept soft, little fingers that explored his warm palm like the tongues of mice. They did feel, in part, chill.

"If I could but share a little of your manly heat," pleaded Hsi Wang Mu.

The Most Clear was not to be deceived. Though with something of a pang, he flung the supplicating hand from him, and with commendable resolution turned his back upon Hsi Wang Mu.

For a moment there was silence in the crowded cell. Then Lo felt the coverlet being lifted; there was a small bumping behind him on the bed; a half-smothered, laughing sigh. Then a slender arm encircled him.

"Oh, highly-pleasing warmth," muttered the Goddess behind

him. She gave another, a purring sigh, as if composing herself to sleep. With an immense gasp of relief the abbot relaxed his tense posture. It was a grave mistake. The highly-pleasing warmth increased.

While the moonlight crawled up the cell's far corner, the abbot's progress along the Middle Way to the company of the Immortals was again rudely, acutely diverted.

It need not be said that upon the morrow the feelings of The Most Clear were glum in the extreme. Feeling far from well, his thoughts were obsessed by premonitions of nightly visitations without end. Poor Lo could envisage his life being brought to an untimely end with all hope of Heavenly Advancement completely shattered.

In the days that followed he could think of little else but what fresh threat the night would bring. Excuses, plots, subterfuges, were powerless against the demands of Hsi Wang Mu. It truly seemed as if, now that she had embraced the habit of human intercourse, nothing could satisfy her.

Lo adopted every possible manœuvre. He pleaded, threatened, wheedled; in vain. He even attempted what might be described as a counter-attack. It was a hilarious failure.

His last resort was to try to proof himself against the charms of Hsi Wang Mu. To the complete mystification of his monks he caused one of the great copper cauldrons to be filled with icy water from the mountain rill. Then, on an open shoulder of Mu Shan mountain, just when the sun as big as a pumpkin was disappearing behind the distant snowy peaks, and when the frost could be heard dropping out of the bitter air like rice into the threshing bin, the unhappy Lo stood immersed in the freezing water up to his waist.

The sun went down, the frost tinkled in the air. For the space of nearly an hour Lo stood, his extremities turning to ice.

When he was lifted out by anxious helpers and carried to his cell, he pulled the coverlet over him with a hopeful heart. So far as he could judge sabotage was total.

Vain conceit. When morning came Lo had again been ravished. And, to add to increasing debility, he now also ached in all his bones.

No doubt his sad condition accounted for the meekness with which The Most Clear, The Holy One, greeted the robber band of He-Who-Eats-Tigers, Chiang.

This gang of pirates, fearing neither gods nor man, had long been the scourge of the coastal region beyond Mu Shan. That

they had not attacked the Temple of Heavenly Condescension before this time was due not to any scruple on their part, but to the reputation of this temple's monks of being a sturdy band of fellows well able, under their abbot, to defend themselves with ferocity. But this time, when the pirates' foray was announced, defence measures did not seem to be put into force with the same attack-repelling effect as usual.

The robbers, appearing across the clearing below the bottom terrace of the temple, uttered an enemy-routing roar. The monks, instead of being marshalled ready to make a counter yell, followed by a concerted leap into the air of peculiarly intimidating effectiveness, were still scurrying about under the abbot's listless direction, looking for weapons and armour. As a consequence, after a few monks had been hacked down, the attackers found themselves inside the temple, victorious.

The abbot was carried, his head bumping the ground, into the presence of He-Who-Eats-Tigers, Chiang.

The pirate chief was a man of offensive hairiness. About a dark, greedy face, unpleasant black whiskers sprouted with hideous virility. His manner lacked ceremony. Without any preliminary courtesies he presented his demands.

"You have treasure here, Old Goat." (This to an abbot!) "Produce it. All of it." He raised a ragged pole and flicked it across Lo's shins.

The abbot howled placatingly. Hopping sadly from the blow, he bowed profusely.

"It is all yours, good sir."

The abbot signed to two monks to come forward. When they had unwillingly done so he instructed them to show He-Who-Eats-Tigers all the precious objects that the temple had. They were very many.

As Lo detailed them, the pirate chief's eyes gittered.

When he had finished, Lo bowed the three times once again.

"I have one boon to crave," he ventured.

"Speak," growled the chief ungraciously.

"Take all there is in this poor place," said Lo. "I hide nothing from your eminent self. But spare, I pray you, one small thing of no value; no value at all."

"And what is that?" the great brute asked, crafty-eyed.

"A mere statue of plaster. Valueless, I swear."

"Where is it?" demanded He-Who-Eats-Tigers.

Lo led the way, up the three flights of wide stone steps, across the two empty courts into the Hall of the Gods. He indicated with a deprecating hand the statue of Hsi Wang Mu. The pirate looked long at it, sucking his teeth noisily. He passed a hairy hand across his lips.

He roared to his men. "Get poles and thongs of bamboo. Make a platform of stools. Set this thing thereon."

And so, when the pirate band left the completely pillaged Temple of Heavenly Condescension, they bore with them, not only every precious object, but also the statue of Hsi Wang Mu.

The Most Clear, the Holy One, stood with the trembling remnants of his monks to watch them go. Carried by eight stout, manly fellows, on a platform lashed on to long poles, the statue swayed with pleasing gracefulness as its bearers stumbled down the winding path.

Lo gazed upon the excessively masculine He-Who-Eats-Tigers, Chiang, as that evil one gave him a mock salutation. Then Lo looked anxiously at Hsi Wang Mu.

There was still light enough from the high snow peaks to see by. Lo was sure that he saw upon the face of Hsi Wang Mu a smile of almost girlish expectancy.

He turned away. His face, as he surveyed the smoking ruins of the temple, was smiling too.

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GOING BY BUS

A bus starts from the Elephant and Castle with a certain number of men and women passengers. The conductor's name is Alfred, or "Alf" for short.

At the first stopping place, a third of the women get out and their places are taken by men. At the next stopping place, a third of the men get out and their places are taken by women. There are now two more women than men passengers and as many men as there originally were women.

How many of each were there at the start?

For baffled readers the answer is at the foot of page 159.

Fathoms Deep

It is as light as a leaf,
as strong as steel.
There is no grief
so striped to feel.

There is no háppiness
so bitter bright
as the dark kiss
in the deep night.

It is surrender,
and the taken city,
certainty, wonder,
and brutal pity.

It is to be thrall
and utterly free.
It is to be all,
and not to be.

HUMBERT WOLFE, *The Uncelestial City*

Shoreless Sea

He lived alternately with her image and her presence: with the first he became a starving rabble, all crying their separate hungers—with the last he seemed to collect into some adoring, accepting unity . . . All the words that he had read and heard applied to his state were not, he discovered, merely elegant, eighteenth-century turns of phrase but painfully, bitterly apt. Love *was* a fever—it burned and consumed him as he tossed and

ached through burning delirious nights: it was a snare, a trap, a gin . . .

Time seemed now to have a life of its own—double-edged, airy and malignant. On the few occasions when he was alone with her, it was gathered together into a whole—like a jewel in his hand—each moment with her was a facet reflected in his shining content. When they were four, it flowed over him in a flowery inconsequent manner—neither here nor there so to speak; but when he was alone or without her, it assumed thunderous, sullen, immovable proportions: it hung like a stone round his neck; it was like an eternal black sea with no shore.

ELIZABETH JANE HOWARD, *The Sea Change*

Head over Heels

But he was in his twentieth year,
This time I'm speaking of;
We were head over heels in love with fear
And half a-feared of love

Within his arms I feared to sink
Where lions shook their manes,
And dragons drawn in azure ink
Leapt quickened in his veins.

Dreadful his strength and length of limb
As the sea to foundering ships;
I dipped my hands in love for him
No deeper than their tips

And something made our wills to bend
As wild as trees blown over;
We were no longer friend and friend,
But only lover and lover.

ELINOR WYLIE, *The Puritan's Ballad*

Over the Verge

"And how about love? "

" Nothing," I said, rather pink, " just a joke."

" Good. I should like you to be on the verge of love but not yet quite in it. That's a very nice state of mind, while it lasts."

But of course, I had already dived over that verge and was swimming away in a blue sea of illusion towards, I supposed, the islands of the blest, but really towards domesticity, maternity, and the usual lot of womankind.

NANCY MITFORD, *Love in a Cold Climate*

I wonder, by my troth, what thou and I
Did till we loved! Were we not weaned till then,
But sucked on country pleasures childishly?
Or snorted we in the seven sleepers' den?
'Twas so; but this, all pleasures fancies be.
If ever any beauty I did see,
Which I desired, and got, 'twas but a dream of thee.

And now good morrow to our waking souls,
Which watch not one another out of fear;
For love all love of other sights controls,
And makes one little room an everywhere.
Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone;
Let maps to others worlds on worlds have shown;
Let us possess one world: each hath one, and is one.

JOHN DONNE, *The Good-Morrow*

Breaking with Love

Swiftly and noisily as he went, the last words followed him, crying after him, beseeching him,

" *For her mouth, her mouth, her mouth,*
That on her beauty I might slake my drouth."

Two hours later, he came dragging down the Rue des Chantres. So tired was he, so broken, that he did not even raise his head to see the candle-light in his high window . . . She heard them, those hopeless, dragging feet: it was her heart they stumbled on, breaking with love and pity. He stood, bewildered by the light: she saw his eyes seeking, not yet comprehending, suddenly wild with hope. With a little stifled cry she held out her arms to him: he was on his knees at her feet, his head buried in her lap, his whole body shaking . . . She stooped and took his head and carried it to her breast.

HELEN WADDELL, *Peter Abelard*

What was happening to the birds?

MARMALADE WINE

BY JOAN AIKEN

"PARADISE," Blacker said to himself, moving forward into the wood. "Paradise. Fairyland."

He was a man given to exaggeration; poetic licence he called it. His friends referred to "Blacker's little flights of fancy," or something less polite, but on this occasion he spoke nothing but the truth. The wood stood silent about him, tall, golden, with afternoon sunlight slanting through the half-unfurled leaves of early summer. Underfoot, anemones palely carpeted the ground. A cuckoo called.

"Paradise," Blacker repeated, closing the gate behind him, and strode down the overgrown path, looking for a spot in which to eat his ham sandwich. Hazel bushes thickened at either side until the circular blue eye of the gateway by which he had come in dwindled to a pinpoint and vanished. The taller trees overtopping the hazels were not yet in full leaf and gave little cover; it was very hot in the wood and very still.

Suddenly Blacker stopped short with an exclamation of surprise and regret: lying among the dog's-mercury by the path was the body of a cock-pheasant in the full splendour of its spring plumage. Blacker turned the bird over with the townsman's pity and curiosity at such evidence of nature's unkindness; the feathers, purple-bronze, green, and gold, were smooth under his hand as a girl's hair.

"Poor thing," he said aloud, "what can have happened to it?" He walked on, wondering if he could turn the incident to account. *Threnody for a Pheasant in May*. Too precious? Too sentimental? Perhaps a weekly would take it. He began choosing rhymes, staring at his feet as he walked, abandoning his conscious rapture at the beauty around him.

Stricken to death . . . and something . . . leafy ride,
Before his . . . something . . . fully flaunt his pride.

Or would a shorter line be better, something utterly simple and heartfelt, limpid tears of grief like spring rain dripping off the petals of a flower?

It was odd, Blacker thought, increasing his pace, how difficult he found writing nature poetry; nature was beautiful, maybe, but it was not stimulating. And it was nature poetry that *Field and Garden* wanted. Still, that pheasant ought to be worth five guineas. *Tread lightly past, Where he lies still, And something last . . .*

Damn! In his absorption he had nearly trodden on another pheasant. What was happening to the birds? Blacker, who objected to occurrences with no visible explanation, walked on frowning. The path bore downhill to the right, and leaving the hazel coppice, crossed a tiny valley. Below him Blacker was surprised to see a small, secretive flint cottage, surrounded on three sides by trees. In front of it was a patch of turf. A deck-chair stood there, and a man was peacefully stretched out in it, enjoying the afternoon sun.

Blacker's first impulse was to turn back; he felt as if he had walked into somebody's garden, and was filled with mild irritation at the unexpectedness of the encounter. There ought to have been some warning signs, dash it all. The wood had seemed as deserted as Eden itself. But his turning round would have an appearance of guilt and furtiveness; on second thoughts, he decided to go boldly past the cottage. After all there was no fence, and the path was not marked private in any way; he had a perfect right to be there.

"Good afternoon," said the man pleasantly as Blacker approached. "Remarkably fine weather, is it not?"

"I do hope I'm not trespassing."

Studying the man, Blacker revised his first guess. This was no gamekeeper; there was distinction in every line of the thin sculptured face. What most attracted Blacker's attention were the hands holding a small gilt coffee-cup; they were as white, frail, and attenuated as the pale roots of water plants.

"Not at all," the man said cordially. "In fact you arrive at a most opportune moment; you are very welcome. I was just wishing for a little company. Delightful as I find this sylvan retreat, it becomes, all of a sudden, a little dull, a little banal. I do trust that you have time to sit down and share my after-lunch coffee and liqueur."

As he spoke he reached behind him and brought out a second deck-chair from the cottage porch.

"Why, thank you; I should be delighted," said Blacker,

wondering if he had the strength of character to take out the ham sandwich and eat it in front of this patrician hermit.

Before he had made up his mind, the man had gone into the house and returned with another gilt cup full of black, fragrant coffee, hot as Tartarus, which he handed to Blacker. He carried also a tiny glass, and into this, from a blackcurrant-cordial bottle, he carefully poured a clear, colourless liquid. Blacker sniffed his glassful with caution, mistrusting the bottle and its evidence of home-brewing, but the scent, aromatic and powerful, was similar to that of curaçao, and the liquid moved in its glass with an oily smoothness. It certainly was not cowslip wine.

"Well," said his host, reseating himself and gesturing slightly with his glass, "how do you do?" He sipped delicately.

"Cheers," said Blacker, and added, "my name's Roger Blacker." It sounded a little lame. The liqueur was not curaçao, but akin to it, and quite remarkably potent. Blacker, who was very hungry, felt the fumes rise up inside his head as if an orange tree had taken root there and was putting out leaves and golden glowing fruit.

"Sir Francis Deeking," the other man said, and then Blacker understood why his hands had seemed so spectacular, so portentously out of the common.

"The surgeon? But surely you don't live down here?"

Deeking waved a hand deprecatingly. "A weekend retreat. A hermitage, to which I can retire from the strain of my calling."

"It certainly is very remote," Blacker remarked. "It must be five miles from the nearest road."

"Six. And you, my dear Mr. Blacker, what is your profession?"

"Oh, a writer," said Blacker modestly. The drink was having its usual effect on him; he managed to convey not that he was a journalist with literary yearnings, on a local daily, but that he was a philosopher and essayist of rare quality, a sort of second Montaigne. All the time he spoke, while drawn out most flatteringly by the questions of Sir Francis, he was recalling journalistic scraps of information about his host; the operation on the Indian Prince; the Cabinet Minister's appendix; the amputation performed on that unfortunate ballerina who had both feet crushed in a railway accident; the major operation which had proved so miraculously successful on the American heiress . . .

"You must feel like a god," he said suddenly, noticing with surprise that his glass was empty. Sir Francis waved the remark aside.

"We all have our godlike attributes," he said, leaning forward. "Now you, Mr. Blacker, a writer, a creative artist—do you not know a power akin to godhead when you transfer your thought to paper?"

"Well, not exactly then," said Blacker, feeling the liqueur moving inside his head in golden and russet-coloured clouds. "Not so much then, but I do have one unusual power—a power not shared by many people—of foretelling the future. For instance, as I was coming through the wood, I knew this house would be here. I knew I should find you sitting in front of it. I can look at the list of runners in a race, and the name of the winner fairly leaps out at me from the page as if it was printed in golden ink. Forthcoming events—air disasters, train crashes, I always sense in advance. I begin to have a terrible feeling of impending doom, as if my brain was a volcano just on the point of eruption."

What was that other item of news about Sir Francis Deeking, he wondered, a recent report, a tiny paragraph that had caught his eye in *The Times*? He could not recall it.

"Really?" Sir Francis was looking at him with the keenest interest; his eyes, hooded and fanatical under their heavy lids, held brilliant points of light. "I have always longed to know somebody with such a power. It must be a terrifying responsibility."

"Oh, it is," Blacker said. He contrived to look bowed under the weight of supernatural cares; noticed that his glass was full again, and drained it. "Of course I don't use the faculty for my own ends; something fundamental in me rises up to prevent that. It's as basic, you know, as the instinct forbidding cannibalism or incest."

"Quite, quite," Sir Francis agreed. "But for another person you would be able to give warnings, advise profitable courses of action? My dear fellow, your glass is empty. Allow me."

"This is marvellous stuff," Blacker said hazily. "It's like a wreath of orange blossom." He gestured with his finger.

"I distil it myself; from marmalade. But do go on with what you were saying. Could you, for instance, tell me the winner of this afternoon's Manchester Plate?"

"Bow Bells," Blacker said unhesitatingly. It was the only name he could remember.

"You interest me enormously. And the result of today's Aldwych by-election? Do you know that?"

"Unwin, the Liberal, will get in by a majority of two hundred and eighty-two. He won't take his seat, though. He'll be killed

at seven this evening in a lift accident at his hotel." Blacker was well away by now.

"Will he, indeed!" Sir Francis appeared delighted. "A pestilent fellow. I have sat on several boards with him. Do continue."

Blacker required little encouragement. He told the story of the financier whom he had warned in time of the oil company crash; the dream about the famous violinist which had resulted in the man's cancelling his passage on the ill-fated Orion; and the tragic tale of the bullfighter who had ignored his warning.

"But I am talking too much about myself," he said at length, partly because he noticed an ominous clogging of his tongue, a refusal of his thoughts to marshal themselves. He cast about for an impersonal topic, something simple.

"The pheasants," he said. "What's happened to the pheasants? Cut down in their prime. It—it's terrible. I found four in the wood up there, four or five."

"Really?" Sir Francis seemed callously uninterested in the fate of pheasants. "It's the chemical sprays they use on the crops, I understand. Bound to upset the ecology; they never work out the probable results beforehand. Now if you were in charge, my dear Mr. Blacker— But forgive me, it is a hot afternoon and you must be tired and footsore if you have walked from Witherstow this morning—let me suggest that you have a short sleep . . ."

His voice seemed to come from farther and farther away; a network of sun-coloured leaves laced themselves in front of Blacker's eyes. Gratefully he leaned back and stretched out his aching feet.

Some time after this Blacker roused a little—or was it only a dream—to see Sir Francis standing by him, rubbing his hands with a face of jubilation.

"My dear fellow, my dear Mr. Blacker, what a lusus naturae you are. I can never be sufficiently grateful that you came my way. Bow Bells walked home—positively ambled. I have been listening to the commentary. What a misfortune that I had no time to place money on the horse—but never mind, never mind, that can be remedied another time. "It is unkind of me to disturb your well-earned rest, though; drink this last thimbleful, and finish your nap while the sun is on the wood."

As Blacker's head sank back against the deck-chair again, Sir Francis leaned forward and gently took the glass from his hand.

Sweet river of dreams, thought Blacker, fancy the horse

actually winning. I wish I'd had a fiver on it myself; I could do with a new pair of shoes. I should have undone these before I dozed off, they're too tight or something. I must wake up soon, ought to be on my way in half an hour or so . . .

When Blacker finally woke, he found that he was lying on a narrow bed indoors, covered with a couple of blankets. His head ached and throbbed with a shattering intensity, and it took a few minutes for his vision to clear; then he saw that he was in a small white cell-like room which contained nothing but the bed he was on and a chair. It was very nearly dark.

He tried to struggle up, but a strange numbness and heaviness had invaded the lower part of his body; and after hoisting himself on to his elbow he felt so sick that he abandoned the effort and lay down again.

That stuff must have the effect of a knockout drop, he thought ruefully; what a fool I was to drink it. I'll have to apologise to Sir Francis. What time can it be?

"Ah, my dear Blacker, I see you have come round. Allow me to offer you a drink."

He raised Blacker skilfully, and gave him a drink of water from a cup with a rim and a spout.

"Now, let me settle you down again. Excellent. We shall soon have you—well, not on your feet, but sitting up and taking nourishment." He laughed a little. "You can have some beef tea presently."

"I am so sorry," Blacker said. "I really need not trespass on your hospitality any longer. I shall be quite all right in a minute."

"No trespass, my dear friend. You are not at all in the way. I hope that you will be here for a long and pleasant stay. These surroundings, so restful, so conducive to a writer's inspiration—what could be more suitable for you? You need not think that I shall disturb you. I am in London all the week but shall keep you company at weekends—pray, pray, don't think that you will be a nuisance or de trop. On the contrary, I am hoping that you can do me the kindness of giving me the Stock Exchange prices in advance, which will amply compensate for any small trouble I have taken. No, no, you must feel quite at home—please consider, indeed, that this is your home."

Stock Exchange prices? It took Blacker a moment to remember, then he thought, Oh lord, my tongue has played me false as usual. He tried to recall what stupidities he had been guilty of.

"Those stories," he said lamely, "they were all a bit exaggerated,

you know. About my foretelling the future . . . I can't really. That horse's winning was a pure coincidence, I'm afraid."

"Modesty, modesty." Sir Francis was smiling, but he had gone rather pale and Blacker noticed a beading of sweat along his cheekbones. "I am sure you will be invaluable. Since my retirement I find it absolutely necessary to augment my income by judicious investment."

All of a sudden Blacker remembered the gist of that small paragraph in *The Times*. Nervous breakdown. Complete rest . . .

"I—I really must go now," he said uneasily, trying to push himself upright. "I meant to be back by seven."

"Oh, but Mr. Blacker, that is quite out of the question. Indeed, so as to preclude any such action, I have amputated your feet. But you need not worry; I know you will be very happy here. And I feel certain that you are wrong to doubt your own powers. Let us listen to the ten o'clock news in order to be quite satisfied that the detestable Unwin did fall down the hotel lift shaft."

He walked over to the portable radio and switched it on.

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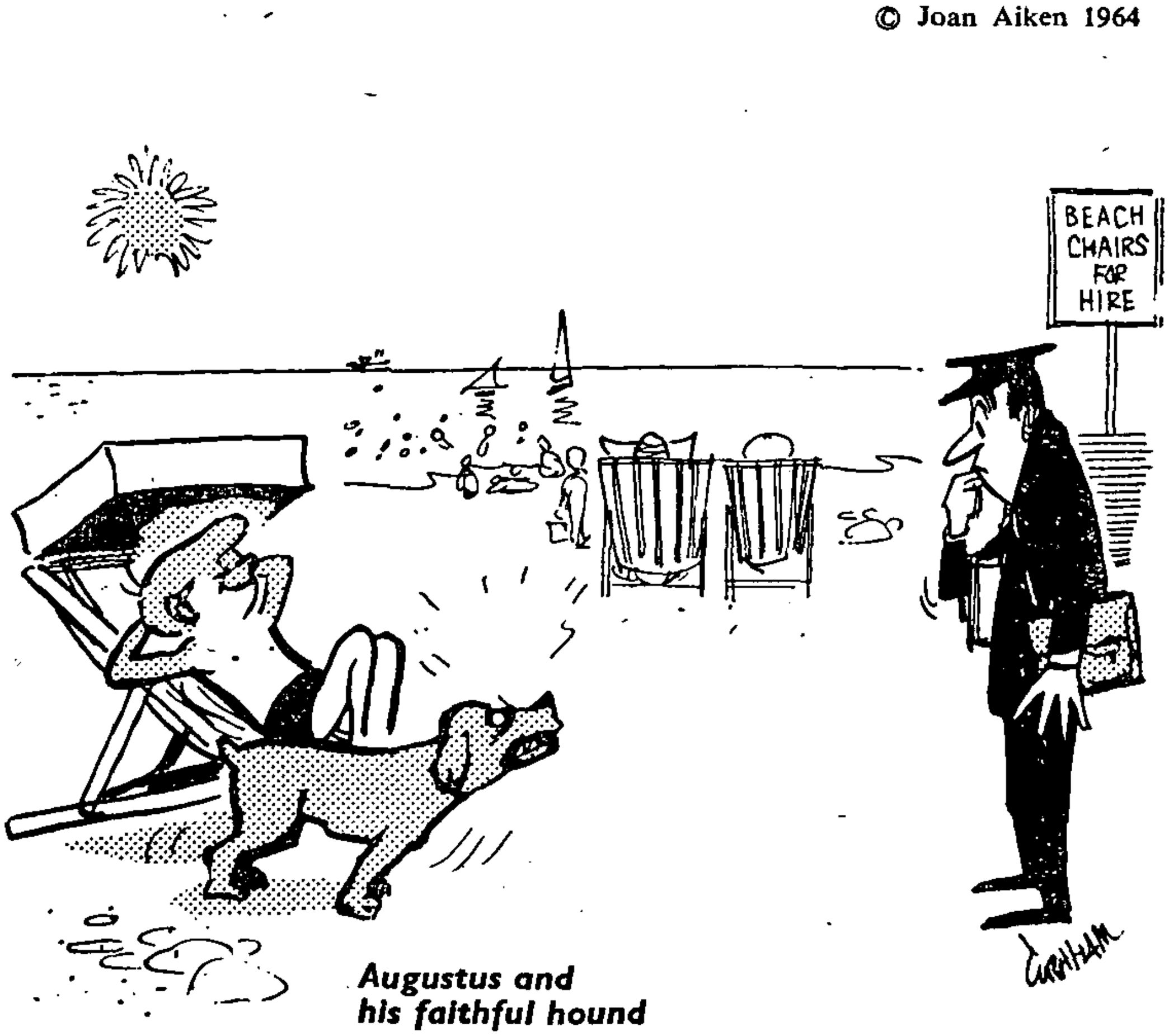


Augustus and his faithful hound

A MOVEABLE FEAST

MORE EXTRACTS FROM THE NEW

ERNEST HEMINGWAY

WHEN WE came back to Paris it was clear and cold and lovely. The city had accommodated itself to winter, there was good wood for sale at the wood and coal place across our street, and there were braziers outside of many of the good cafés so that you could keep warm on the terraces. Our own apartment was warm and cheerful. We burned boulets, which were moulded, egg-shaped lumps of coal dust, on the wood fire, and on the streets the winter light was beautiful.

Now you were accustomed to see the bare trees against the sky and you walked on the fresh-washed gravel paths through the Luxembourg gardens in the clear sharp wind. The trees were sculpture without their leaves when you were reconciled to them, and the winter winds blew across the surfaces of the ponds and the fountains blew in the bright light. All the distances were short now since we had been in the mountains.

Because of the change in altitude I did not notice the grade of the hills except with pleasure, and the climb up to the top floor of the hotel where I worked, in a room that looked across all the roofs and the chimneys of the high hill of the quarter, was a pleasure. The fireplace drew well in the room and it was warm and pleasant to work. I brought mandarins and roasted chestnuts to the room in paper packets and peeled and ate the small tangerine-like oranges, and threw their skins and spat their seeds in the fire when I ate them and the roasted chestnuts when I was hungry. I was always hungry with the walking and the cold and the working.

Up in the room I had a bottle of kirsch that we had brought back from the mountains and I took a drink of kirsch when I would get towards the end of a story or towards the end of the day's work. When I was through working for the day I put away the notebook, or the paper, in the drawer of the table and put any mandarins that were left in my pocket. They would freeze if they were left in the room at night.

It was wonderful to walk down the long flights of stairs knowing that I'd had good luck working. I always worked until I had something done and I always stopped when I knew what

"If you are lucky enough to have lived in Paris as a young man, then wherever you go for the rest of your life, it stays with you, for Paris is a moveable feast." **Ernest Hemingway**

was going to happen next. That way I could be sure of going on the next day. But sometimes when I was starting a new story and I could not get it going, I would sit in front of the fire and squeeze the peel of the little oranges into the edge of the flame and watch the sputter of blue that they made.

I would stand and look out over the roofs of Paris and think, Do not worry. You have always written before and you will write now. All you have to do is write one true sentence. Write the truest sentence that you know. So finally I would write one true sentence, and then go on from there. It was easy then because there was always one true sentence that I knew or had seen or had heard someone say. If I started to write elaborately, or like someone introducing or presenting something, I found that I could cut that scroll-work or ornament out and throw it away and start with the first true simple declarative sentence I had written. Up in that room I decided that I would write one story about each thing that I knew about. I was trying to do this all the time I was writing, and it was good and severe discipline.

It was in that room too that I learnt not to think about anything that I was writing, from the time I stopped writing until I started again the next day. That way my subconscious would be working on it and at the same time I would be listening to other people and noticing everything, I hoped; learning, I hoped; and I would read so that I would not think about my work and make myself impotent to do it. Going down the stairs when I had worked well—and that needed luck as well as discipline—was a wonderful feeling and I was free then to walk anywhere in Paris.

If I walked down by different streets to the Jardins du Luxembourg in the afternoon, I could walk through the gardens and then go to the Musée du Luxembourg where the great paintings were that have now mostly been transferred to the Louvre and the Jeu de Paume. I went there nearly every day for the Cézannes and to see the Manets and the Monets and the other Impressionists that I had first come to know about in the Art Institute at Chicago. I was learning something from the painting of Cézanne that made writing simple true sentences far from enough to make the stories have the dimensions that I was trying to put in them. I was learning very much from him but I was not articulate enough to explain it to anyone. Besides, it was a secret. But if the light was gone in the Luxembourg, I would walk up through the gardens and stop in at the studio apartment where Gertrude Stein lived at 27 rue de Fleurus.

" Here is Hemingway at his best. No one has ever written about Paris in the nineteen-twenties as well."

CHARLES POORE,
New York Times

My wife and I had called on Miss Stein, and she and the friend who lived with her had been very cordial and friendly and we had loved the big studio with the great paintings. It was like one of the best rooms in the finest museum except there was a big fireplace and it was warm and comfortable, and they gave you good things to eat and tea and natural distilled liqueurs made from purple plums, yellow plums or wild raspberries. These were fragrant, colourless alcohols served from cut-glass carafes in small glasses, and whether they were quetsche, mirabelle or framboise they all tasted like the fruits they came from, converted into a controlled fire on your tongue that warmed you and loosened it.

Miss Stein was very big but not tall and was heavily built like a peasant woman. She had beautiful eyes and a strong German-Jewish face that also could have been friulano, and she reminded me of a Northern Italian peasant woman with her clothes, her mobile face, and her lovely thick, alive, immigrant hair which she wore put up in the same way she had probably worn it in college. She talked all the time and at first about people and places.

Her companion had a very pleasant voice, was small, very dark, with her hair cut like Joan of Arc in the Boutet de Monvel illustrations, and had a very hooked nose. She was working on a piece of needlepoint when we first met them and she worked on this and saw to the food and drink and talked to my wife. She made one conversation and listened to two and often interrupted the one she was not making. Afterwards she explained to me that she always talked to the wives. The wives, my wife and I felt, were tolerated. But we liked Miss Stein and her friend, although the friend was frightening. The paintings and the cakes and the eau-de-vie were truly wonderful. They seemed to like us too and treated us as though we were very good, well-mannered and promising children, and I felt that they forgave us for being in love and being married—time would fix that—and when my wife invited them to tea, they accepted.

When they came to our flat they seemed to like us even more; but perhaps that was because the place was so small and we were much closer together. Miss Stein sat on the bed that was on the floor and asked to see the stories I had written, and she

said that she liked them except one called *Up in Michigan.*

"It's good," she said. "That's not the question at all. But it is *inaccrochable.* That means it is like a picture that a painter paints and then he cannot hang it when he has a show and nobody will buy it because they cannot hang it either."

"But what if it is not dirty but it is only that you are trying to use words that people would actually use? That are the only words that can make the story come true and that you must use them? You have to use them."

"But you don't get the point at all," she said. "You mustn't write anything that is *inaccrochable.* There is no point in it. It's wrong and it's silly."

She herself wanted to be published in *The Atlantic Monthly*, she told me, and she would be. She told me that I was not a good enough writer to be published there or in the *Saturday Evening Post* but that I might be some new sort of writer in my own way, but the first thing to remember was not to write stories that were *inaccrochable.* I did not argue about this nor try to explain again what I was trying to do about conversation. That was my own business and it was much more interesting to listen. That afternoon she told us, too, how to buy pictures.

"You can either buy clothes or buy pictures," she said. "It's that simple. No one who is not very rich can do both. Pay no attention to your clothes and no attention at all to the mode, and buy your clothes for comfort and durability, and you will have the clothes-money to buy pictures."

"But even if I never bought any more clothing ever," I said, "I wouldn't have enough money to buy the Picassos that I want."

"No. He's out of your range. You have to buy the people of your own age—of your own military service group. You'll know them. You'll meet them around the quarter. There are always good new serious painters. But it's not you buying clothes so much. It's your wife always. It's women's clothes that are expensive."

I saw my wife trying not to look at the strange, steerage clothes that Miss Stein wore and she was successful. When they left we were still popular, I thought, and we were asked to come again to 27 rue de Fleurus.

It was later on that I was asked to come to the studio any time after five in the wintertime. I had met Miss Stein in the Luxembourg. I cannot remember whether she was walking her dog or not, nor whether she had a dog then. I know that I was walking

> **" The gay and artless sketches** (with a lifetime of craft behind each deceptively negligent line) have a heartbreaking quality."
>
> —*Time*

myself, since we could not afford a dog nor even a cat then, and the only cats I knew were in the cafés or small restaurants or the great cats that I admired in concierges' windows. Later I often met Miss Stein with her dog in the Luxembourg gardens; but I think this time was before she had one.

But I accepted her invitation, dog or no dog, and had taken to stopping in at the studio, and she always gave me the natural eau-de-vie, insisting on my refilling my glass, and I looked at the pictures and we talked. The pictures were exciting and the talk was very good. She talked, mostly, and she told me about modern pictures and about painters—more about them as people than as painters—and she talked about her work. She showed me the many volumes of manuscript that she had written, and that her companion typed each day. Writing every day made her happy, but as I got to know her better I found that for her to keep happy it was necessary that this steady daily output, which varied with her energy, be published and that she receive recognition.

This had not become an acute situation when I first knew her, since she had published three stories that were intelligible to anyone. One of these stories, *Melanctha*, was very good, and good samples of her experimental writing had been published in book form and had been well praised by critics who had met her or known her. She had such a personality that when she wished to win anyone over to her side she would not be resisted, and critics, who met her and saw her pictures, took on trust writing of hers that they could not understand because of their enthusiasm for her as a person, and because of their confidence in her judgment. She had also discovered many truths about rhythms and the use of words in repetition that were valid and valuable and she talked well about them.

But she disliked the drudgery of revision and the obligation to make her writing intelligible, although she needed to have publication and official acceptance, especially for the unbelievably long book called *The Making of Americans*.

This book began magnificently, went on very well for a long way with great stretches of great brilliance, and then went on endlessly in repetitions that a more conscientious and less lazy writer would have put in the waste basket. I came to know it very well as I got—forced, perhaps, would be the word—Ford

Madox Ford to publish it in *The Transatlantic Review* serially, knowing that it would outrun the life of the review. For publication in the review I had to read all of Miss Stein's proof for her as this was a work which gave her no happiness.

On this cold afternoon when I had come past the concierge's lodge and the cold courtyard to the warmth of the studio, all that was years ahead. On this day Miss Stein was instructing me about sex. By that time we liked each other very much and I had already learnt that everything I did not understand probably had something to it. Miss Stein thought that I was too uneducated about sex and I must admit that I had certain prejudices against homosexuality since I knew its more primitive aspects. I knew it was why you carried a knife and would use it when you were in the company of tramps when you were a boy in the days when wolves was not a slang term for men obsessed by the pursuit of women.

I knew many *inaccrochable* terms and phrases from Kansas City days and the mores of different parts of that city, Chicago and the Lake boats.

Under questioning I tried to tell Miss Stein that when you were a boy and moved in the company of men, you had to be prepared to kill a man, know how to do it and really know that you would do it in order not to be interfered with. That term was *accrochable*. If you knew you would kill, other people sensed it very quickly and you were let alone; but there were certain situations you could not allow yourself to be forced into or trapped into. I could have expressed myself more vividly by using an *inaccrochable* phrase that wolves use on the Lake boats, "Oh gash may be fine but one eye for mine." But I was always careful of my language with Miss Stein even when true phrases might have clarified or better expressed a prejudice.

"Yes, yes, Hemingway," she said. "But you were living in a milieu of criminals and perverts."

I did not want to argue that, although I thought that I had lived in a world as it was and there were all kinds of people in it and I tried to understand them, although some of them I could not like and some I still hated.

"But what about the old man with beautiful manners and a great name who came to the hospital in Italy and brought me a bottle of Marsala or Campari and behaved perfectly, and then one day I would have to tell the nurse never to let that man into the room again?" I asked.

"Those people are sick and cannot help themselves and you should pity them . . ."

> **" Frank and moving . . .** an invaluable portrait of the artist as a young man . . . when mere loving and mere writing were enough."
>
> **CLIFTON FADIMAN,**
> *Book-of-the-Month Club News*

" I did at the time," I said. " But I was disappointed because he had such beautiful manners."

I took another sip of the eau-de-vie and pitied the old man and looked at Picasso's nude of the girl with the basket of flowers. I had not started the conversation and I thought it had become a little dangerous. There were almost never any pauses in a conversation with Miss Stein, but we had paused and there was something she wanted to tell me and I filled my glass.

" You know nothing about any of this really, Hemingway," she said. " You've met known criminals, and sick people, and vicious people. The main thing is that the act male homosexuals commit is ugly and repugnant and afterwards they are disgusted with themselves. They drink and take drugs, to palliate this, but they are disgusted with the act and they are always changing partners and cannot be really happy."

There were so many things to understand in those days and I was glad when we talked about something else. The park was closed so I had to walk down along it to the rue de Vaugirard and around the lower end of the park.

It was sad when the park was closed and locked and I was sad walking around it instead of through it and in a hurry to get home to the rue du Cardinal Lemoine. The day had started out so brightly too. I would have to work hard tomorrow. Work could cure almost anything, I believed then, and I believe now. Then all I had to be cured of, I decided Miss Stein felt, was youth and loving my wife. I was not at all sad when I got home to the rue du Cardinal Lemoine and told my newly acquired knowledge to my wife. In the night we were happy with our own knowledge we already had and other new knowledge we had acquired in the mountains.

★

IT WAS easy to get into the habit of stopping in at 27 rue de Fleurus late in the afternoon for the warmth and the great pictures and the conversation. Often Miss Stein would have no guests, and she was always very friendly and for a long time she was affectionate.

When I had come back from trips that I had made to the different political conferences or to the Near East or Germany

for the Canadian paper and the news services that I worked for, she wanted me to tell her about all the amusing details. There were funny parts always and she liked them and also what the Germans call gallows-humour stories. She wanted to know the gay part of how the world was going; never the real, never the bad.

I was young and not gloomy and there were always strange and comic things that happened in the worst time and Miss Stein liked to hear these. The other things I did not talk of and wrote by myself.

When I had not come back from any trips and would stop in at the rue de Fleurus after working, I would try sometimes to get Miss Stein to talk about books. When I was writing, it was necessary for me to read after I had written. It was necessary to get exercise, to be tired in the body, and it was very good to make love with whom you loved. That was better than anything. But afterwards, when you were empty, it was necessary to read in order not to think or worry about your work until you could do it again. I had learnt already never to empty the well of my writing, but always to stop when there was still something there in the deep part of the well, and let it refill at night from the springs that fed it.

To keep my mind off writing sometimes after I had worked I would read writers who were writing then, such as Aldous Huxley, D. H. Lawrence or any who had books published that I could get from Sylvia Beach's library or find along the quais.

"Huxley is a dead man," Miss Stein said. "Why do you want to read a dead man? Can't you see he is dead?"

I could not see, then, that he was a dead man, and I said that his books amused me and kept me from thinking.

"You should only read what is truly good or what is frankly bad."

"I've been reading truly good books all winter and all last winter and I'll read them next winter, and I don't like frankly bad books."

"Why do you read this trash? It is inflated trash, Hemingway. By a dead man."

"I like to see what they are writing," I said. "And it keeps my mind off me doing it."

"Who else do you read now?"

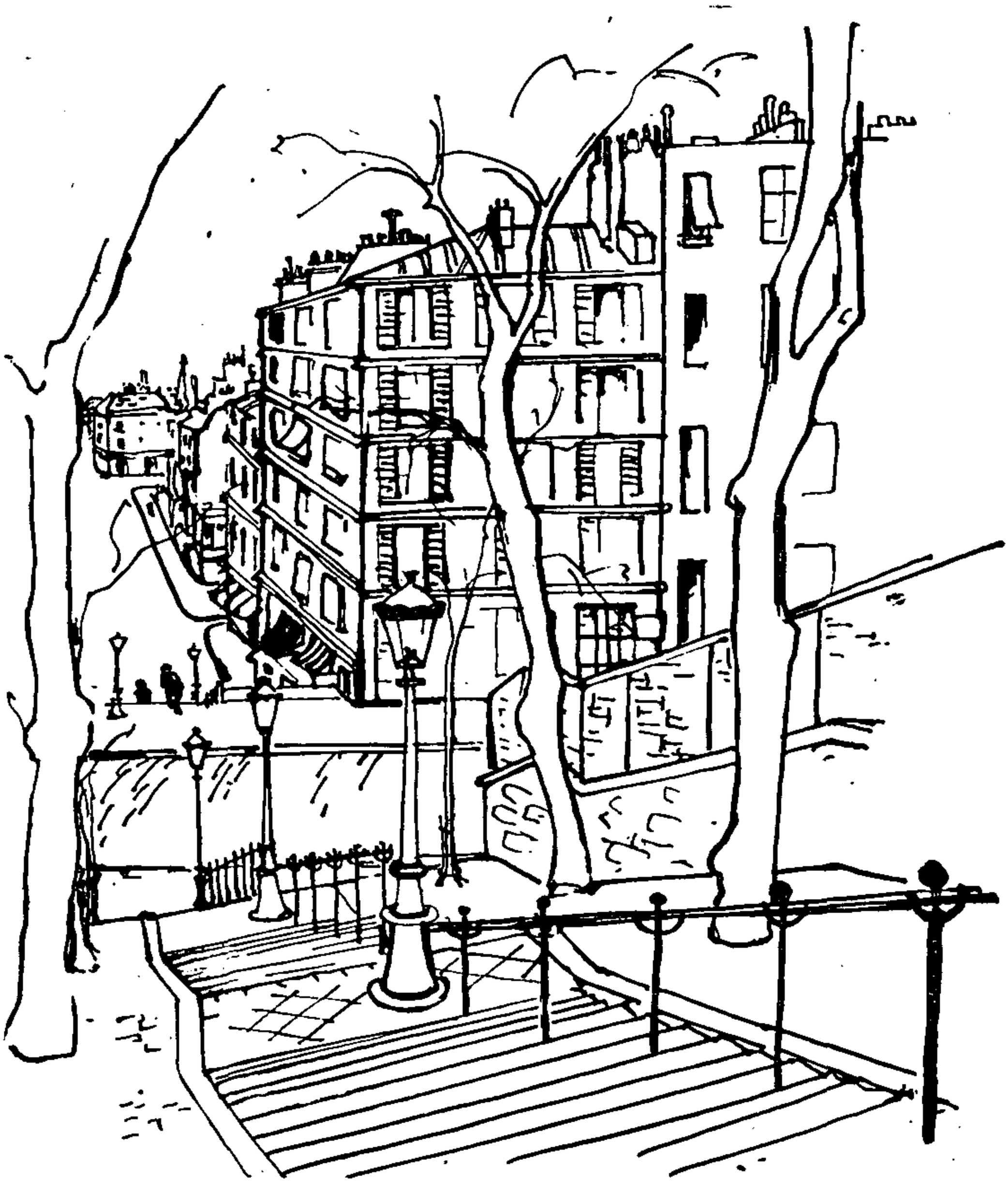
"D. H. Lawrence," I said. "He wrote some very good short stories, one called *The Prussian Officer*."

"I tried to read his novels. He's impossible. He's pathetic and preposterous. He writes like a sick man."

"I liked *Sons and Lovers* and *The White Peacock*," I said. "Maybe that not so well. I couldn't read *Women in Love*."

"If you don't want to read what is bad, and want to read something that will hold your interest and is marvellous in its own way, you should read Marie Belloc Lowndes."

I had never heard of her, and Miss Stein loaned me *The Lodger*, that marvellous story of Jack the Ripper, and another book about murder at a place outside Paris, that could only be Enghien-les-Bains. They were both splendid after-work books, the people credible and the action and the terror never false. They were perfect for reading after you had worked and I read all the Mrs. Belloc Lowndes that there was. But there was only so much, and none as good as the first two and I never found any-



thing as good for that empty time of day or night until the first fine Simenon books came out.

I think Miss Stein would have liked the good Simenons—the first one I read was either *L'Ecluse Numéro* 1, or *La Maison du Canal*, but I am not sure because when I knew Miss Stein she did not like to read French although she loved to speak it. Janet Flanner gave me the first two Simenons I ever read. She loved to read French and she had read Simenon when he was a crime reporter.

In the three or four years that we were good friends, I cannot remember Gertrude Stein ever speaking well of any writer who had not written favourably about her work or done something to advance her career except for Ronald Firbank and, later, Scott Fitzgerald. When I first met her she did not speak of Sherwood Anderson as a writer but spoke glowingly of him as a man and of his great, beautiful, warm Italian eyes and of his kindness and his charm. I did not care about his great beautiful warm Italian eyes but I liked some of his short stories very much. They were simply written and sometimes beautifully written and he knew the people he was writing about and cared deeply for them. Miss Stein did not want to talk about his stories but always about him as a person.

"What about his novels?" I asked her. She did not want to talk about Anderson's works any more than she would talk about Joyce. If you brought up Joyce twice, you would not be invited back. It was like mentioning one general favourably to another general. You learnt not to do it the first time you made the mistake. You could always mention a general, though, that the general you were talking to had beaten. The general you were talking to would praise the beaten general greatly and go happily into detail on how he had beaten him.

Anderson's stories were too good to make happy conversation. I was prepared to tell Miss Stein how strangely poor his novels were, but this would have been bad too because it was criticising one of her most loyal supporters. When he wrote a novel finally called *Dark Laughter*, so terribly bad, silly and affected that I could not keep from criticising it in a parody *The Torrents of Spring*, Miss Stein was very angry. I had attacked someone that was a part of her apparatus. But for a long time before that she was not angry. She, herself, began to praise Sherwood lavishly after he had cracked up as a writer.

She was angry at Ezra Pound because he had sat down too quickly on a small, fragile and, doubtless, uncomfortable chair, that it is quite possible he had been given on purpose, and had

> **" What is startling is . . .** the vividness of his feelings, their intensity and immediacy. There lies the key to the book, and its abiding interest."
>
> *Newsweek*

either cracked or broken it. That he was a great poet and a gentle and generous man and could have accommodated himself in a normal-size chair was not considered. The reasons for her dislike of Ezra, skilfully and maliciously put, were invented years later.

It was when we had come back from Canada and were living in the rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs and Miss Stein and I were still good friends that Miss Stein made the remark about the lost generation. She had some ignition trouble with the old Model T Ford she then drove, and the young man who worked in the garage and had served in the last year of the war had not been adept, or perhaps had not broken the priority of other vehicles, in repairing Miss Stein's Ford. Anyway he had not been sérieux, and had been corrected severely by the patron of the garage after Miss Stein's protest. The patron had said to him, *You are all a génération perdue.*

" That's what you are. That's what you all are—" Miss Stein said—" all of you young people who served in the war. You are a lost generation."

" Really? " I said.

" You are," she insisted. " You have no respect for anything. You drink yourselves to death . . ."

" Was the young mechanic drunk? " I asked.

" Of course not."

" Have you ever seen me drunk? "

" No. But your friends are drunk."

" I've been drunk," I said. " But I don't come here drunk."

" Of course not. I didn't say that."

" The boy's patron was probably drunk by eleven o'clock in the morning," I said. " That's why he makes such lovely phrases."

" Don't argue with me, Hemingway," Miss Stein said. " It does no good at all. *You're all a lost generation*, exactly as the garage keeper said."

Later when I wrote my first novel, I tried to balance Miss Stein's quotation from the garage keeper with one from Ecclesiastes. But that night walking home I thought about the boy in the garage and if he had ever been hauled in one of those vehicles when they were converted to ambulances.

I remembered how they used to burn out their brakes going down the mountain roads with a full load of wounded and braking in low gear and finally using the reverse, and how the last ones were driven over the mountainside empty, so they could be replaced by big Fiats with a good H-shift and metal-to-metal brakes. I thought of Miss Stein and Sherwood Anderson and egotism and mental laziness versus discipline and I thought who is calling who a lost generation? Then as I was getting up to the Closerie des Lilas with the light on my old friend, the statue of Marshal Ney with his sword out, and the shadows of the trees on the bronze, and he alone there and nobody behind him and what a fiasco he'd made of Waterloo, I thought that all generations were lost by something and always had been and always would be . . .

I stopped at the Lilas to keep the statue company and drank a cold beer before going home to the flat over the sawmill. But sitting there with the beer, watching the statue and remembering how many days Ney had fought, personally, with the rearguard on the retreat from Moscow that Napoleon had ridden away from in the coach with Caulaincourt, I thought of what a warm and affectionate friend Miss Stein had been and how beautifully she had spoken of Apollinaire, and of his death on the day of the Armistice in 1918 with the crowd shouting *à bas Guillaume*, and Apollinaire, in his delirium, thinking they were crying against him . . . I thought, I will do my best to serve her and see she gets justice for the good work she has done as long as I can, so help me God and Mike Ney. But the hell with her lost-generation talk and all the dirty, easy labels.

★

When I got home and into the courtyard and upstairs and saw my wife and my son and his cat, F. Puss, all of them happy, and a fire in the fireplace, I said to my wife, "You know, Gertrude *is* nice, anyway."

"Of course, Tatie."

"But she does talk a lot of rot sometimes."

"I never hear her," my wife said. "I'm a wife. It's her friend that talks to me."

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"**. . . a joy to read . . .** He is at his best in evocation of being young and in love . . ."

ALAN PRYCE-JONES,
New York Herald Tribune

She looked dazzling, radiant, rich, voluptuous

MRS. BIXBY AND THE COLONEL'S COAT

BY ROALD DAHL

AMERICA is the land of opportunity for women. Already they own about eighty-five per cent of the wealth of the nation. Soon they will have it all. Divorce has become a lucrative process, simple to arrange and easy to forget; and ambitious females can repeat it as often as they please and parlay their winnings to astronomical figures.

The husband's death also brings satisfactory rewards and some ladies prefer to rely upon this method. They know that the waiting period will not be unduly protracted, for overwork and hypertension are bound to get the poor devil before long, and he will die at his desk with a bottle of benzedrines in one hand and a packet of tranquillisers in the other.

Succeeding generations of youthful American males are not deterred in the slightest by this terrifying pattern of divorce and death. The higher the divorce rate climbs, the more eager they become. Young men marry like mice, almost before they have reached the age of puberty, and a large proportion of them have at least two ex-wives on the payroll by the time they are thirty-six years old.

To support these ladies in the manner to which they are accustomed, the men must work like slaves, which is of course precisely what they are. But now at last, as they approach their premature middle age, a sense of disillusionment and fear begins to creep slowly into their hearts, and in the evenings they take to huddling together in little groups, in clubs and bars, drinking their whiskies and swallowing their pills, and trying to comfort one another with stories.

The basic theme of these stories never varies. There are always three main characters—the husband, the wife, and the dirty dog. The husband is a decent clean-living man, working hard at

his job. The wife is cunning, deceitful, and lecherous, and she is invariably up to some sort of jiggery-pokery with the dirty dog. The husband is too good a man even to suspect her. Things look black for the husband. Will the poor man ever find out? Must he be a cuckold for the rest of his life? Yes, he must. But wait!

Suddenly, by a brilliant manuœvre, the husband completely turns the tables on his monstrous spouse. The woman is flabbergasted, stupefied, humiliated, defeated. The audience of men around the bar smiles quietly to itself and takes a little comfort from the fantasy.

There are many of these stories going around—these wonderful wishful thinking dreamworld inventions of the unhappy male, but most of them are too fatuous to be worth repeating, and far too fruity to be put down on paper. There is one, however, that seems to be superior to the rest, particularly as it has the merit of being true. It is extremely popular with twice- or thrice-bitten males in search of solace, and if you are one of them, you may enjoy the way it comes out.

The story is called *Mrs. Bixby and the Colonel's Coat*, and it goes something like this—

★

Dr. and Mrs. Bixby lived in a smallish apartment somewhere in New York City. Dr. Bixby was a dentist who made an average income. Mrs. Bixby was a big vigorous woman with a wet mouth.

Once a month, always on Friday afternoons, Mrs. Bixby would board the train at Pennsylvania Station and travel to Baltimore to visit her old aunt.

She would spend the night with the aunt and return to New York on the following day in time to cook supper for her husband.

Dr. Bixby accepted this arrangement good-naturedly. He knew that Aunt Maude lived in Baltimore, and that his wife was very fond of the old lady, and certainly it would be unreasonable to deny either of them the pleasure of a monthly meeting.

"Just so long as you don't ever expect me to accompany you," Dr. Bixby had said in the beginning.

"Of course not, darling," Mrs. Bixby had answered. "After all, she is not your aunt. She's mine."

So far so good.

As it turned out, however, the aunt was little more than a convenient alibi for Mrs. Bixby. The dirty dog, in the shape of a gentleman known as the Colonel, lurked slyly in the background,

Roald Dahl's stories are a heady mixture, brilliant, unforgettable—a super quality dry champagne that readers cannot be offered often enough, and return to again and again with special pleasure and excitement.

and our heroine spent the greater part of her Baltimore time in this scoundrel's company.

The Colonel was exceedingly wealthy. He lived in a charming house on the outskirts of the town. No wife or family encumbered him, only a few discreet and loyal servants, and in Mrs. Bixby's absence he consoled himself by riding his horses and hunting the fox.

Year after year, this pleasant alliance between Mrs. Bixby and the Colonel continued without a hitch. They met so seldom—twelve times a year is not much when you come to think of it—that there was little or no chance of their growing bored with one another. On the contrary, the long wait between meetings only made the heart grow fonder, and each separate occasion became an exciting reunion.

" Tally-ho! " the Colonel would cry each time he met her at the station in the big car. " My dear, I'd almost forgotten how ravishing you looked. Let's go to earth."

Eight years went by.

It was just before Christmas, and Mrs. Bixby was standing on the station in Baltimore waiting for the train to take her back to New York. This particular visit which had just ended had been more than usually agreeable, and she was in a cheerful mood. But then the Colonel's company always did that to her these days. The man had a way of making her feel that she was altogether a rather remarkable woman, a person of subtle and exotic talents, fascinating beyond measure; and what a very different thing that was from the dentist husband at home who never succeeded in making her feel that she was anything but a sort of eternal patient; someone who dwelt in the waiting-room, silent among the magazines, seldom if ever nowadays to be called in to suffer the finicky precise ministrations of those clean pink hands.

" The Colonel asked me to give you this," a voice beside her said. She turned and saw Wilkins, the Colonel's groom, a small wizened dwarf with grey skin, and he was pushing a large flattish cardboard box into her arms.

" Good gracious me! " she cried, all of a flutter. " My heavens, what an enormous box! What is it, Wilkins? Was there a message? Did he send me a message?"

"No message," the groom said, and he walked away.

As soon as she was on the train, Mrs. Bixby carried the box into the privacy of the Ladies' Room and locked the door. How exciting this was! A Christmas present from the Colonel. She started to undo the string.

"I'll bet it's a dress," she said aloud. "It might even be two dresses. Or it might be a whole lot of beautiful underclothes. I won't look. I'll just feel around and try to guess what it is. I'll try to guess the colour as well, and exactly what it looks like. Also how much it cost."

She shut her eyes tight and slowly lifted off the lid. Then she put one hand down into the box. There was some tissue paper on top; she could feel it and hear it rustling. There was also an envelope or a card of some sort. She ignored this and began burrowing underneath the tissue paper, the fingers reaching out delicately, like tendrils.

"My God," she cried suddenly. "It can't be true!"

She opened her eyes wide and stared at the coat. Then she pounced on it and lifted it out of the box. Thick layers of fur made a lovely noise against the tissue paper as they unfolded, and when she held it up and saw it hanging to its full length, it was so beautiful it took her breath away.

Never had she seen mink like this before. It *was* mink, wasn't it? Yes, of course it was. But what a glorious colour! The fur was almost pure black. At first she thought it was black; but when she held it closer to the window she saw that there was a touch of blue in it as well, a deep rich blue, like cobalt. Quickly she looked at the label. It said simply:

WILD LABRADOR MINK

There was nothing else, no sign where it had been bought or anything. But that, she told herself, was probably the Colonel's doing. The wily old fox was making darn sure he didn't leave any tracks. Good for him. But what in the world could it have cost? She hardly dared to think. Four, five, six thousand dollars? Possibly more . . .

She just couldn't take her eyes off it. Nor, for that matter, could she wait to try it on. Quickly she slipped off her own plain red coat. She was panting a little now, she couldn't help it, and her eyes were stretched very wide. But oh, the feel of that fur! And those huge wide sleeves with their thick turned-up cuffs! Who was it had once told her that they always used female skins for the arms and male skins for the rest of the coat? Someone had told her that.

Joan Rutfield, probably; though how Joan would know any thing about mink she couldn't imagine.

The great black coat seemed to slide on to her almost of its own accord, like a second skin. Oh boy! It was the queerest feeling! She glanced into the mirror. It was fantastic. Her whole personality had suddenly changed completely. She looked dazzling, radiant, rich, brilliant, voluptuous, all at the same time. And the sense of power that it gave her! In this coat she could walk into any place she wanted and people would come scurrying around her like rabbits. The whole thing was just too wonderful for words!

Mrs. Bixby picked up the envelope that was still lying in the box. She opened it and pulled out the Colonel's letter:

I once heard you saying you were fond of mink so I got you this. I'm told it's a good one. Please accept it with my sincere good wishes as a parting gift. For my own personal reasons I shall not be able to see you any more.
Goodbye and good luck.

Well!
Imagine that!
Right out of the blue, just when she was feeling so happy.
No more Colonel.
What a dreadful shock!
She would miss him enormously.

Slowly, Mrs. Bixby began stroking the lovely soft black fur of the coat.

What you lose on the swings you get back on the roundabouts.

She smiled and folded the letter, meaning to tear it up and throw it out of the window, but in folding it she noticed there was something written on the other side:

P.S. Just tell them that nice generous aunt of yours gave it to you for Christmas.

Mrs. Bixby's mouth, at that moment stretched wide in a silky smile, snapped back like a piece of elastic.

" The man must be mad! " she cried. " Aunt Maude doesn't have that sort of money. She couldn't possibly give me this."

But if Aunt Maude didn't give it to her, then who did?

Oh God! In the excitement of finding the coat and trying it on, she had completely overlooked this vital aspect.

In a couple of hours she would be in New York. Ten minutes after that she would be home, and the husband would be there to greet her; and even a man like Cyril, dwelling as he did in a dark

phlegmy world of root canals, bicuspids, and caries, would start asking a few questions if his wife suddenly waltzed in from a weekend wearing a six-thousand-dollar mink coat.

You know what I think, she told herself. I think that goddamn Colonel has done this on purpose just to torture me. He knew perfectly well Aunt Maude didn't have enough money to buy this. He knew I wouldn't be able to keep it.

But the thought of parting with it now was more than Mrs. Bixby could bear.

" I've got to have this coat! " she said aloud. " I've got to have this coat! I've got to have this coat! "

Very well, my dear. You shall have the coat. But don't panic. Sit still and keep calm and start thinking. You're a clever girl, aren't you? You've fooled him before. The man never has been able to see much further than the end of his own probe, you know that. So just sit absolutely still and think. There's lots of time.

Two and a half hours later, Mrs. Bixby stepped off the train at Pennsylvania Station and walked quickly to the exit. She was wearing her old red coat again now and carrying the cardboard box in her arms.

She signalled for a taxi.

" Driver," she said, " would you know of a pawnbroker that's still open around here? "

The man behind the wheel raised his brows and looked back at her, amused.

" Plenty along Sixth Avenue," he answered.

" Stop at the first one you see, then, will you please? " She got in and was driven away.

Soon the taxi pulled up outside a shop that had three brass balls hanging over the entrance.

" Wait for me, please," Mrs. Bixby said to the driver, and she got out of the taxi and entered the shop.

There was an enormous cat crouching on the counter eating fishheads out of a white saucer. The animal looked up at Mrs. Bixby with bright yellow eyes, then looked away again and went on eating. Mrs. Bixby stood by the counter, as far away from the cat as possible, waiting for someone to come, staring at the watches, the shoe buckles, the enamel brooches, the old binoculars, the broken spectacles, the false teeth. Why did they always pawn their teeth, she wondered.

" Yes? " the proprietor said, emerging from a dark place in the back of the shop.

" Oh, good evening," Mrs. Bixby said. She began to untie the

string around the box. The man went up to the cat and started stroking it along the top of its back, and the cat went on eating the fishheads.

" Isn't it silly of me? " Mrs. Bixby said. " I've gone and lost my notecase, and this being Saturday, the banks are all closed until Monday and I've simply got to have some money for the weekend. This is quite a valuable coat, but I'm not asking much. I only want to borrow enough on it to tide me over till Monday. Then I'll come back and redeem it."

The man waited, and said nothing. But when she pulled out the mink and allowed the beautiful thick fur to fall over the counter, his eyebrows went up and he drew his hand away from the cat and came over to look at it. He picked it up and held it out in front of him.

" If only I had a watch on me or a ring," Mrs. Bixby said, " I'd give you that instead. But the fact is I don't have a thing with me other than this coat." She spread out her fingers for him to see.

" It looks new," the man said, fondling the soft fur.

" Oh yes, it is. But, as I said, I only want to borrow enough to tide me over till Monday. How about fifty dollars? "

" I'll loan you fifty dollars."

" It's worth a hundred times more than that, but I know you'll take good care of it until I return."

The man went over to a drawer and fetched a ticket and placed it on the counter. The ticket looked like one of those labels you tie on to the handle of your suitcase, the same shape and size exactly, and the same stiff brownish paper. But it was perforated across the middle so that you could tear it in two, and both halves were identical.

" Name? " he asked.

" Leave that out. And the address."

She saw the man pause, and she saw the nib of the pen hovering over the dotted line, waiting.

" You don't have to put the name and address, do you? "

The man shrugged and shook his head and the pen nib moved on down to the next line.

" It's just that I'd rather not," Mrs. Bixby said. " It's purely personal."

" You'd better not lose this ticket, then."

" I won't lose it."

" You realise that anyone who gets hold of it can come in and claim the article? "

" Yes, I know that."

" Simply on the number."

" Yes, I know."

" What do you want me to put for a description? "

" No description either, thank you. It's not necessary. Just put the amount I'm borrowing."

The pen nib hesitated again, hovering over the dotted line beside the word ARTICLE.

" I think you ought to put a description. A description is always a help if you want to sell the ticket. You never know, you might want to sell it sometime."

" I don't want to sell it."

" You might have to. Lots of people do."

" Look," Mrs. Bixby said. " I'm not broke, if that's what you mean. I simply lost my notecase. Don't you understand? "

" You have it your own way then," the man said. " It's your coat."

At this point an unpleasant thought struck Mrs. Bixby. " Tell me something," she said. " If I don't have a description on my ticket, how can I be sure you'll give me back the coat and not something else when I return? "

" It goes in the books."

" But all I've got is a number. So actually you could hand me any old thing you wanted, isn't that so? "

" Do you want a description or don't you? " the man asked.

" No," she said. " I trust you."

The man wrote fifty dollars opposite the word VALUE on both sections of the ticket, then he tore it in half along the perforations and slid the lower portion across the counter. He took a wallet from the inside pocket of his jacket and extracted five ten-dollar bills. " The interest is three per cent a month," he said.

" Yes, all right. And thank you. You'll take good care of it, won't you? "

The man nodded but said nothing.

" Shall I put it back in the box for you? "

" No," the man said.

Mrs. Bixby turned and went out of the shop into the street where the taxi was waiting. Ten minutes later, she was home.

" Darling," she said as she bent over and kissed her husband, " did you miss me? "

Cyril Bixby laid down the evening paper and glanced at the watch on his wrist. " It's twelve and a half minutes past six," he said. " You're a bit late, aren't you? "

" I know. It's those dreadful trains. Aunt Maude sent you her love as usual. I'm dying for a drink, aren't you? "

The husband folded his newspaper into a neat rectangle and placed it on the arm of his chair. Then he stood up and crossed over to the sideboard. His wife remained in the centre of the room pulling off her gloves, watching him carefully, wondering how long she ought to wait.

He had his back to her now, bending forward to measure the gin, putting his face right up close to the measurer and peering into it as though it were a patient's mouth.

It was funny how small he always looked after the Colonel. The Colonel was huge and bristly, and when you were near him he smelled faintly of horseradish. This one was small, neat and bony and he didn't really smell of anything at all except peppermint drops, which he sucked to keep his breath nice for the patients.

"See what I've bought for measuring the vermouth," he said, holding up a calibrated glass beaker. "I can get it to the nearest milligram with this."

"Darling, how clever."

I really must try to make him change the way he dresses, she told herself. His suits are just too ridiculous for words. There had been a time when she thought they were wonderful, those Edwardian jackets with high lapels and six buttons down the front, but now they merely seemed absurd. So did the narrow stovepipe trousers. You had to have a special sort of face to wear things like that, and Cyril just didn't have it. His was a long bony countenance with a narrow nose and a slightly prognathous jaw, and when you saw it coming up out of the top of one of those tightly fitting old-fashioned suits it looked like a caricature of Sam Weller. He probably thought it looked like Beau Brummel. It was a fact that in the office he invariably greeted female patients with his white coat unbuttoned so that they would catch a glimpse of the trappings underneath; and in some obscure way this was obviously meant to convey the impression that he was a bit of a dog. But Mrs. Bixby knew better.

The plumage was a bluff. It meant nothing. It reminded her of an ageing peacock strutting on the lawn with only half its feathers left. Or one of those fatuous self-fertilising flowers—like the dandelion. A dandelion never has to get fertilised for the setting of its seed, and all those brilliant yellow petals are just a waste of time, a boast, a masquerade. What's that word the biologists use? Subsexual. A dandelion is subsexual. So, for that matter, are the summer broods of water fleas. It sounds a bit like Lewis Carroll, she thought—water fleas and dandelions and dentists.

"Thank you, darling," she said, taking the martini and seating

herself on the sofa with her handbag on her lap. " And what did you do last night? "

" I stayed on in the office and cast a few inlays. I also got my accounts up to date."

" Now really, Cyril, I think it's high time you let other people do your donkey work for you. You're much too important for that sort of thing. Why not give inlays to the mechanic? "

" I prefer to do them myself. I'm extremely proud of my inlays."

" I know you are, darling, and I think they're absolutely wonderful. They're the best inlays in the whole world. But I don't want you to burn yourself out. And why doesn't that Pulteney woman do the accounts? That's part of her job, isn't it? "

" She does do them. But I have to price everything up first. She doesn't know who's rich and who isn't."

" This martini is perfect," Mrs. Bixby said, setting down her glass on the side table. " Quite perfect." She opened her bag and took out a handkerchief as if to blow her nose. " Oh look! " she cried, seeing the ticket. " I forgot to show you this! I found it just now on the seat of my taxi. It's got a number on it, and I thought it might be a lottery ticket or something, so I kept it."

She handed the small piece of stiff brown paper to her husband, who took it in his fingers and began examining it minutely from all angles, as though it were a suspect tooth.

" You know what this is? " he said slowly.

" No, dear, I don't."

" It's a pawn ticket."

" A what? "

" A ticket from a pawnbroker. Here's the name and address of the shop—somewhere on Sixth Avenue."

" Oh dear, I *am* disappointed. I was hoping it might be a ticket for the Irish Sweep."

" There's no reason to be disappointed," Cyril Bixby said. " As a matter of fact this could be rather amusing."

" Why could it be amusing, darling? "

He began explaining to her exactly how a pawn ticket worked, with particular reference to the fact that anyone possessing the ticket was entitled to claim the article. She listened patiently until he had finished his lecture.

" You think it's worth claiming? " she asked.

" I think it's worth finding out what it is. You see this figure of fifty dollars that's written here? You know what that means? "

" No, dear, what does it mean? "

" It means that the item in question is almost certain to be something quite valuable."

" You mean it'll be worth fifty dollars? "

" More like five hundred."

" Five hundred! "

" Don't you understand? " he said. " A pawnbroker never gives you more than about a tenth of the real value."

" Good gracious! I never knew that."

" There's a lot of things you don't know, my dear. Now you listen to me. Seeing that there's no name and address of the owner . . ."

" But surely there's something to say who it belongs to? "

" Not a thing. People often do that. They don't want anyone to know they've been to a pawnbroker. They're ashamed of it."

" Then you think we can keep it? "

" Of course we can keep it. This is now our ticket."

" You mean my ticket," Mrs. Bixby said firmly. " I found it."

" My dear girl, what does it matter? The important thing is that we are now in a position to go and redeem it any time we like for only fifty dollars. How about that? "

" Oh, what fun! " she cried. " I think it's terribly exciting, especially when we don't even know what it is. It could be anything, isn't that right, Cyril? Absolutely anything! "

" It could indeed, although it's most likely to be either a ring or a watch."

" But wouldn't it be marvellous if it was a *real* treasure? I mean something *really* old, like a wonderful old vase or a Roman statue."

" There's no knowing what it might be, my dear. We shall ust have to wait and see."

" I think it's absolutely fascinating! Give me the ticket and I'll rush over first thing Monday morning and find out! "

" I think I'd better do that."

" Oh no! " she cried. " Let me do it! "

" I think not. I'll pick it up on my way to work."

" But it's my ticket! Please let me do it, Cyril! Why should you have all the fun? "

" You don't know these pawnbrokers, my dear. You're liable to get cheated."

" I wouldn't get cheated, honestly I wouldn't. Give it to me, please."

" Also you have to have fifty dollars," he said, smiling. " You have to pay out fifty dollars in cash before they'll give it to you."

" I've got that," she said. " I think."

" I'd rather you didn't handle it, if you don't mind."

" But, Cyril, I found it. It's mine. Whatever it is, it's mine, isn't that right? "

" Of course it's yours, my dear. There's no need to get so worked up about it."

" I'm not. I'm just excited, that's all."

" I suppose it hasn't occurred to you that this might be something entirely masculine—a pocket watch, for example, or a set of shirt studs. It isn't only women that go to pawnbrokers, you know."

" In that case I'll give it to you for Christmas," Mrs. Bixby said magnanimously. " I'll be delighted. But if it's a woman's thing, I want it myself. Is that agreed? "

" That sounds very fair. Why don't you come with me when I collect it? "

Mrs. Bixby was about to say yes to this, but caught herself just in time. She had no wish to be greeted like an old customer by the pawnbroker in her husband's presence.

" No," she said slowly. " I don't think I will. You see, it'll be even more thrilling if I stay behind and wait. Oh, I do hope it isn't going to be something that neither of us wants."

" You've got a point there," he said. " If I don't think it's worth fifty dollars, I won't even take it."

" But you said it would be worth five hundred."

" I'm quite sure it will. Don't worry."

" Oh, Cyril, I can hardly wait! Isn't it exciting? "

" It's amusing," he said, slipping the ticket into his waistcoat pocket. " There's no doubt about that."

Monday morning came at last, and after breakfast Mrs. Bixby followed her husband to the door and helped him on with his coat.

" Don't work too hard, darling," she said.

" No, all right."

" Home at six? "

" I hope so."

" Are you going to have time to go to that pawnbroker? " she asked.

" I forgot all about it. I'll take a cab and go there now. It's on my way."

" You haven't lost the ticket, have you? "

" I hope not," he said, feeling in his waistcoat pocket. " No, here it is."

" And you have enough money? "

" Just about."

"Darling," she said, standing close to him and straightening his tie, which was perfectly straight. "If it happens to be something nice, something you think I might like, will you telephone me as soon as you get to the office?"

"If you want me to, yes."

"You know, I'm sort of hoping it'll be something for you, Cyril. I'd much rather it was for you than for me."

"That's very generous of you, my dear. Now I must run."

About an hour later, when the telephone rang, Mrs. Bixby was across the room so fast she had the receiver off the hook before the first ring had finished.

"I got it!" he said.

"You did! Oh, Cyril, what was it? Was it something good?"

"Good!" he cried. "It's fantastic! You wait till you get your eyes on this! You'll swoon!"

"Darling, what is it? Tell me quick!"

"You're a lucky girl, that's what you are."

"It's for me, then?"

"Of course it's for you. Though how in the world it ever got to be pawned for only fifty dollars I'll be damned if I know. Someone's crazy."

"Cyril! Stop keeping me in suspense! I can't bear it!"

"You'll go mad when you see it."

"What is it?"

"Try to guess."

Mrs. Bixby paused. Be careful, she told herself. Be very careful now.

"A necklace," she said.

"Wrong."

"A diamond ring."

"You're not even warm. I'll gave you a hint. It's something you can wear."

"Something I can wear? You mean like a hat?"

"No, it's not a hat," he said, laughing.

"For goodness' sake, Cyril! Why don't you tell me?"

"Because I want it to be a surprise. I'll bring it home with me this evening."

"You'll do nothing of the sort!" she cried. "I'm coming right down there to get it now!"

"I'd rather you didn't do that."

"Don't be so silly, darling. Why shouldn't I come?"

"Because I'm too busy. You'll disorganise my whole morning schedule. I'm half an hour behind already."

" Then I'll come in the lunch hour. All right? "

" I'm not having a lunch hour. Oh well, come at one-thirty then, while I'm having a sandwich. Goodbye."

At half past one precisely, Mrs. Bixby arrived at Dr. Bixby's place of business and rang the bell. Her husband, in his white dentist's coat, opened the door himself.

" Oh, Cyril, I'm so excited! "

" So you should be. You're a lucky girl, did you know that? " He led her down the passage and into the surgery.

" Go and have your lunch, Miss Pulteney," he said to the assistant, who was busy putting instruments into the steriliser. " You can finish that when you come back." He waited until the girl had gone, then walked over to a cupboard that he used for hanging up his clothes and stood in front of it, pointing with his finger. " It's in there," he said. " Now—shut your eyes."

Mrs. Bixby did as she was told. Then she took a deep breath and held it, and in the silence that followed she could hear him opening the cupboard door, and there was a soft swishing sound as he pulled out a garment from among the other things hanging there.

" All right! You can look!"

" I don't dare to," she said, laughing.

" Go on. Take a peek."

Coyly, beginning to giggle, she raised one eyelid a fraction of an inch, just enough to give her a dark blurry view of the man standing there in his white overalls holding something up in the air.

" Mink! " he cried. " Real mink! "

At the sound of the magic word she opened her eyes quick, and at the same time she actually started forward in order to clasp the coat in her arms.

But there was no coat. There was only a ridiculous little fur neckpiece dangling from her husband's hand.

" Feast your eyes on that! " he said, waving it in front of her face.

Mrs. Bixby put a hand up to her mouth and started backing away. I'm going to scream, she told herself. I just know it. I'm going to scream.

" What's the matter, my dear? Don't you like it? " He stopped waving the fur and stood staring at her, waiting for her to say something.

" Why yes," she stammered. " I . . . I . . . think it's . . . it's lovely . . . really lovely."

" Quite took your breath away for a moment there, didn't it? "

" Yes, it did."

" Magnificent quality," he said. " Fine colour, too. You know something, my dear? I reckon a piece like this would cost you two or three hundred dollars at least if you had to buy it in a shop."

" I don't doubt it."

There were two skins, two narrow mangy-looking skins with their heads still on them and glass beads in their eye sockets and little paws hanging down. One of them had the rear end of the other in its mouth, biting it.

" Here," he said. " Try it on." He leaned forward and draped the thing around her neck, then stepped back to admire. " It's perfect. It really suits you. It isn't everyone who has a mink, my dear."

" No, it isn't."

" Better leave it behind when you go shopping or they'll all think we're millionaires and start charging us double."

" I'll try to remember that, Cyril."

" I'm afraid you mustn't expect anything else for Christmas. Fifty dollars was rather more than I was going to spend anyway."

He turned away and went over to the basin and began washing his hands. " Run along now, my dear, and buy yourself a nice lunch. I'd take you out myself but I've got old man Gorman in the waiting-room with a broken clasp on his denture."

Mrs. Bixby moved towards the door.

I'm going to kill that pawnbroker, she told herself. I'm going right back there to the shop this very minute and I'm going to throw this filthy neckpiece right in his face and if he refuses to give me back my coat I'm going to kill him.

" Did I tell you I was going to be late home tonight? " Cyril Bixby said, still washing his hands.

" No."

" It'll probably be at least eight-thirty the way things look at the moment. It may even be nine."

" Yes, all right. Goodbye." Mrs. Bixby went out, slamming the door behind her.

At that precise moment, Miss Pulteney, the secretary-assistant, came sailing past her down the corridor on her way to lunch.

" Isn't it a gorgeous day? " Miss Pulteney said as she went by, flashing a smile. There was a lilt in her walk, a little whiff of perfume attending her, and she looked like a queen, just exactly like a queen in the beautiful black mink coat that the Colonel had given to Mrs. Bixby.

But spiders are much more interesting . . .

PIECE OF SILKEN THREAD

BY DARRELL BATES

WHEN you are going to lie in one place for four or five hours you take a lot of trouble over it. Holland put the things he wanted so that he could reach them with small, gradual movements, and without noise.

He didn't need many things but each one was important. He laid them out in a semicircle on the moss in front of him: the notebook and pencil, the dividers and the magnifying glass, and a small plastic ruler. He took some cigarettes out of a packet and laid them one by one together with a lighter. Then he hollowed out a place in the ground and wedged a bottle of wine there. The bottle was fitted with a cork and a piece of rubber tubing so that he could suck up the wine without movement or noise.

He had left his Lambretta off the road hidden behind some bushes. He didn't think anyone would steal it but if people saw it by the side of the road they were apt to start looking in hopes of finding an amatory couple. Looking at other people's tangles was to some people more interesting, it seemed, than any they could manage or imagine on their own. He didn't want to be disturbed so he hid his machine with care.

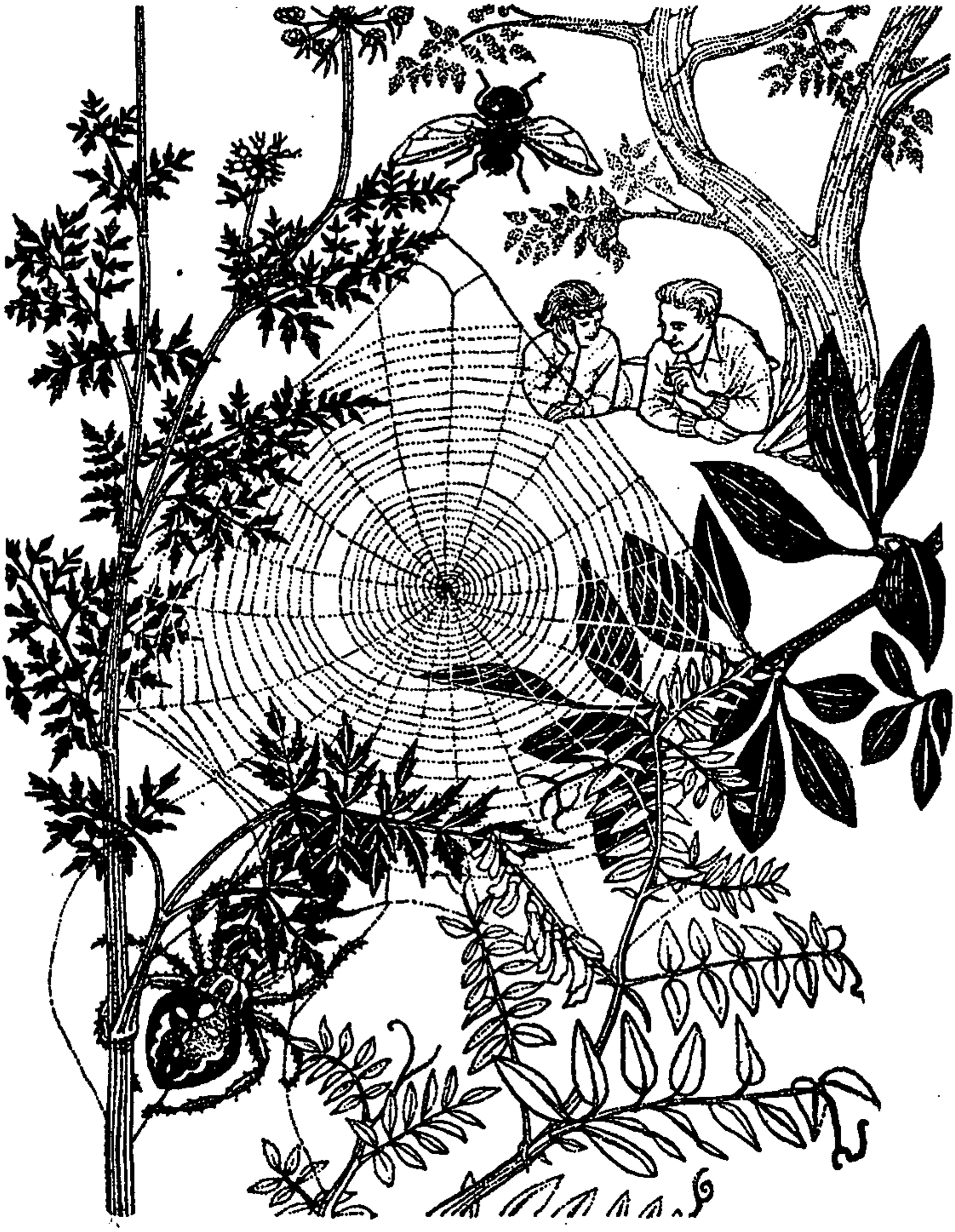
It was very quiet under the chestnut trees but nearly two hours went by before a bluebottle settled and started moving cautiously over the finger-shaped mesh of earth and silk. Holland held his breath and watched.

It was then that he heard the twig snap, and the quick, sudden intake of breath.

"Oh, pardon!" said a whisper of a voice. "I did not see . . ."

He was in agony, after all the waiting, that the fly would go.

"Keep quiet! Keep still!" He hissed as softly and as rudely as he could. The voice was female he knew but he was



in no mood for gallantry. Not that he ever was. Holland Hughes was not a woman's man.

The bluebottle continued its probing journey. Suddenly the thin pincers of jaws came up through the skin of the finger and pierced the insect. It buzzed against the death inside it for a moment before it was drawn down and out of sight.

"Can I move now . . . ?" the voice said.

"No." He didn't want to turn his head in case he missed the thing he really wanted to see.

"But, Monsieur . . ."

"But what?" Why couldn't the woman keep quiet. At any moment now it might happen.

"I am in a hurry . . ."

"Shush," he said. He could see the movement now. Slowly the torn edges of the finger of earth and silk were being drawn together from inside and mended with a weave of thread. He waited until the tear was closed and tight. Then he reached for a cigarette and turned to look at the voice. As soon as he moved, she moved, and ran.

Thank God for that, he thought, and lit his cigarette.

He was measuring the tear with the dividers and making a note of the length when he heard the voice again.

"I am sorry I disturbed you, Monsieur."

She was a thin, wispy sort of girl. Her short boy's-cut hair was untidy, and she wore a dark-blue shirt tucked into a yellow skirt.

Holland scowled and said it was all right.

"What were you looking at?"

"A spider." Most women grimaced or wrinkled their noses but this one, he noticed, smiled tentatively at the word with the corners of her mouth. In mockery perhaps.

"Can I see?"

Scowling still and reluctantly polite he showed her the mended tear. She knelt to look at it closely. "How intelligent they are," she said.

He was slightly impressed. He asked her if she had seen the spider take the bluebottle.

"No, Monsieur. I did not know what you were looking at. Besides I was . . . my mind was on something else." She smiled.

"Yes." He said it quickly in alarm. For one so quiet and shy she was very direct.

"I would have liked to see it."

He looked at her and she didn't slide her eyes away. He started to explain how the spider lived in a burrow lined with its own silky thread and closed at either end. She moved her knees and sat on the moss and listened with an attention and a quietness which led him on. He showed her the finger of web protruding above the level of the moss and bent over at right angles to lie along the ground.

"When an insect moves over the surface of the finger the spider inside the burrow feels the vibration. It moves until it is hanging upside down on the inner side of the finger of web. When it feels the fly is directly above, the spider strikes, and pierces the fly with its fangs."

"For a foreigner you talk French well," she said. "And then?"

"Then the spider withdraws one of her fangs and makes a slit in the wall of the finger big enough for her to pull in the insect and store it in her lair. Then she comes back and sews the tear up with thread."

The girl bent over the finger-shaped web. "If we waited, might we see the spider take another fly?"

"Perhaps. With luck and patience. Much patience."

"Too much for a woman, you think?" Again the small smile at the corner of the mouth. "Could I wait to see?"

"All right," he said, "but you must keep still and quiet."

"That I can do," she said.

They lay for over an hour but no more insects came. The afternoon sun had moved round and it was still and warm. Holland was thirsty and wanted some wine.

He picked up a piece of grass. "Look," he said.

He scraped the tip of the grass over the surface of the finger and then let it rest. A moment later the spider's fangs came through the covering and struck at the grass.

"That was unkind," she said.

"I did it to show you . . ."

"I know," she said. "Kind to me. Unkind to the spider."

She laughed when she saw how he had buried the wine, and the length of rubber tubing.

"You are a curious man."

They drank some wine and smoked. The man's eyes began to droop with the sun and the long watching and the wine.

"You are tired," said the girl. "I had better go."

He didn't say anything, and after a moment or two the girl rose to her feet.

"If you like you can watch for me in case another insect comes . . . If you promise to wake me."

"All right," the girl said, "you sleep and I will watch."

When he woke she was lying on the ground staring still at the spider's burrow.

"I saw nothing," she said . . .

When they got down to the road Holland saw that she had a Lambretta too, the same as his, but newer.

"I didn't see yours," she said. "If I had seen it I would have gone somewhere else."

He explained why he hid his machine. He explained also, when she asked, that he was a professor on holiday, looking at spiders.

"A professor of spiders?" she asked.

"As a matter of fact, no. I am a professor of Latin."

She asked if he were English and he nodded. "Yes," he said, "I am."

"Where are you going now?" she asked, getting on to the saddle of her own machine.

He shrugged his shoulders. "To the next village. Or the next."

"And tomorrow?"

"Spiders. And another village."

"You are a little mad, I think." She started the engine and smiled. "Good-bye, Monsieur."

"Good-bye, Mademoiselle." He smiled too. He was wondering whether, if the wind was right tomorrow, he could find a web with young spiders that were ready to fly.

"How old are you, Monsieur?" she asked. They had finished a supper of omelet and cheese and wine and were sitting at a rough wooden table in the courtyard behind the inn.

"I am thirty-eight." He liked the directness of her questions.

He thought she would ask him next if he was married. He started to rehearse the rebuff of a reply, as he had often done before, but the next question in fact was about spiders.

They talked about spiders until the bottle of wine was empty and a screen of clouds had started to invade the stars.

"I must go to bed." She got up. "I am glad that by chance I saw your machine outside the inn."

"Yes." He wanted to say that he equally was glad that she had seen his machine, and that she too had stayed at the inn. But in the end he said nothing.

He watched her walk across to the door and later when he saw the light in her room he went upstairs and lay on his bed, looking at the stars and the clouds through his window.

It was not until midday that Holland found the sort of web he was looking for. He called the girl and they scooped out the leaves to make a place to watch.

"Can we talk?" she asked.

"Yes. Today we can talk."

He explained how the eggs are laid in the web by the mother spider in a sort of saucer of silk and how, when they are fertilised, she covers and seals them in with another layer of silk.

"When the insects emerge from the eggs," he went on, "they are not fully formed. They have no hairs, or colour or claws, nor can they feed or spin. They go on feeding from the yolk

of the egg until, in a few days, they have grown and shed their infant skin, and emerge with the shape and equipment of a proper spider.

"But," he went on, "if they all stayed on the web where they were born there wouldn't be enough for them to eat. So some of them move away. If for any reason they can't move away they start eating one another. Almost all spiders are cannibals from the cradle to the grave."

"How do they move?" she asked. "Tell me."

"It is that which I had hoped to show—" he hesitated, "—to see today."

The girl's eyes were on the small spiders that had climbed to the top of the grass beyond the web but she noticed the hesitation and the change of words. She didn't look at him but she bent her head slowly towards his shoulder and let it rest there lightly for a moment.

"They are waiting for a breath of wind," he said. He could hear the wind rustling the leaves of the trees.

"Look!" he said. Three or four of the small spiders were exuding a thin thread from their bodies. The wind caught the threads and took the spiders from their perch on the grass into the air. Some of the spiders dropped a foot or so away, but others were carried farther until they were lost to sight.

"Sometimes they go for miles and miles," Holland said. "When they land they start to weave a web of their own."

He lit a cigarette, and without thinking, passed it to the girl. She took it in her fingers and Holland lit another for himself.

"As they grow bigger," she asked, "do they shed their skins, like locusts?"

"What is your name?" he asked.

"Yvette."

"Yes," he went on. "Yes. They do. Some spiders only do it three or four times. Others as many as ten. Only when they have shed their skin for the last time do they become mature and—"

"And what?"

"—and mate."

"Tell me about that."

Holland turned over and lay on his back and puffed at his cigarette. "I would like to measure the distances they have travelled," he said to change the subject. "Will you help me?"

In the afternoon they watched a spider trapping insects in her web. It was very warm, and the flies and winged ants were drowsy and many were caught.

"They are great eaters," Holland said. "Some spiders eat their weight in insects in a single day. Some professor," he tinged the word with a touch of scorn, "calculated that if you weighed the insects eaten by all the spiders in France in a year it would be more than the weight of all the men and the women and the children who live there."

"It is a droll thought, Monsieur. It will cheer me when I see the teacher of mathematics at the Lycée to think of her contribution to that score. She is very large."

"You are a teacher?"

"Yes. Of English."

"Then . . .?"

"Yes. I speak it but not fluently. But let us continue to speak in French. It gives me a little advantage over you. Otherwise I have none . . ."

He looked at the slight, frail figure and the quiet, unobtrusive face, but again her eyes didn't slide away. Her mouth, small and pale, was finely curved he thought.

"You are a woman. That is an advantage in itself."

"Is it?" She picked a blade of grass and put it in her mouth. "Do they say of you in the university that you are the professor who doesn't like women?"

"Yes," he said. "As a matter of fact they do. How did you know?"

She didn't reply, and soon afterwards they walked down the hill through the trees to where they had put the Lambrettas.

That night they stayed in a hotel for commercial travellers in a small town. There were several other people in for the evening meal and they made a lot of noise, both in talking and in eating. Holland and the girl said very little during the meal, and soon afterwards she left to go to her room.

"I am coming too," he said. "I have some notes to write."

At the door of her room she put out her hand. He wanted to thank her for her help, even for her company, but in the end he couldn't find the words. He said nothing and went on down the corridor to his room . . .

"I'm sorry," he said after they had searched and watched all through the morning, "the spiders don't seem to be mating. And yet," he added, "it's a lovely day."

"Yes," she said, "it's a lovely day."

"Tell me," she asked later, "about it. About the mating."

"Well," he started hesitantly, looking everywhere but at the girl. "Each species of spider has his own special method of courting. There are many thousands of different kinds of

spider. Some as big as my hand, and some as small as the head of a pin. And each one has his own technique. He knows it by instinct it seems, and so does the female. It never varies and no spider ever pursues one of another kind."

He looked at her face and saw that she was smiling.

"You are laughing at me."

"No. No. I am not. I was smiling only at the concentration on your face. I see that it is a very serious matter. Is it true," she asked, "that afterwards female spiders eat the males?"

"Sometimes, not often. But several kinds of male spiders take precautions just in case; some, for example, catch a fly before they go courting and wrap it up alive in thread as a gift. She eats the fly while he mates with her, and then he escapes while she is still busy with her meal."

The girl laughed, and put her hand on his shoulder.

"But," he went on, "it doesn't always work. In another species the female draws a thread from her spinnerets, a small piece of silken thread, and binds the mating male to her. Usually, the first time, when he is young and fresh, the male manages to get away with the loss of a leg or two. But the second time the thread holds him and . . ." he switched to English, ". . . she has her cake and eats it."

He touched her hand, and felt her shivering. "It is beginning to get cold," he said. "We should go."

"It was not the cold," she said. "This evening, after we have eaten, will you tell me more about spiders?"

"Yes."

"You promise?"

"Yes, I promise . . ."

"How did you become interested in spiders?"

They were sitting on a bench at a table set out under a tree in front of the inn. The remains of the meal, the cheese and the half-empty bottle of wine were still on the table.

He didn't answer for a long time. It is strange, the girl thought, that when he talks about spiders he loses his taut, anxious look, his awkwardness with words and with his hands. At her probing, personal question the look and the awkwardness had returned. She put her hand on his arm.

"I am sorry. It doesn't matter . . ."

"No," he said, "do not be sorry. But I was thinking. People often ask me that and I always give the same reply. Especially to women. I say that spiders are more interesting than people. More intelligent and less devious . . .

"But," he went on, "it is of course a pose. When you asked the question it made me wonder what the real answer was. And I wasn't sure. I have posed for so long I have forgotten the truth.

"It was an escape from a kind of loneliness perhaps. I have always been an awkward, solitary person . . . " His voice tailed off. "But that might have driven me to any kind of study mightn't it? Birds, or frogs, or flowers . . . why did I choose spiders, I wonder?"

They sat in silence for some time. He took up a toothpick and traced the outline of her hand and her outstretched fingers on the table.

"Perhaps," she said, "it was because in your heart you were fascinated by the male spider . . . by his freedom and his solitary wandering independence."

"Perhaps," he said. "It may be that or," he went on, smiling, "it is because there is also a part of me which, while I seek to deny it, wants to be bound with thread and eaten."

"We must go in now," the girl said, "it is going to rain."

"Will you write to me, Yvette?"

"Yes." She looked down at her hand on the table and at the toothpick as it moved in the angles of her fingers.

"Have you ever asked anyone to write to you before?"

"No," he said, "as a matter of fact I haven't."

The first raindrops fell on the table, and on the dry dusty earth. The light touched the wetness on her hair, in her eyes.

"Tomorrow I must go." He stood up.

"Yes," she said, "I know."

Next morning Yvette stood in the door of the inn and watched Holland move away along the road that went towards the north. At the corner he turned his head and raised his hand.

When he was out of sight she opened the envelope which Holland had given her. Inside was written his name and his address, and underneath, fixed to the paper, was a small bedraggled fly wrapped like a gift with cotton.

She went in through the doorway of the inn.

"I wonder, Madame, if you could help me."

"Yes." The proprietress was a large woman with a round red-cheeked face. "If I can."

"Could you let me have an envelope, and a stamp?"

"For foreign postage, no?"

"Yes. And one other thing if you have it . . . a small piece of silken thread."

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Our batsmen were unconventional . . .

MERRY AS CRICKET

BY A. A. THOMSON

I JOINED the village club in the manner common to the newcomer; that is to say, they told me they wanted me either as vice-president at a guinea or as wicket-keeper who would find his own gloves. So I paid my guinea and bought my own gloves and seldom regretted it.

My first surprise occurred on seeing the slope of the ground. Essex as a county has a reputation for being low and flat, but our little corner was part of a north-west highland region not so well known to the outside world. I understand that the ground at Lord's slopes about seven feet. Our field, in the village I shall continue to call Steeple Thatchby, sloped a good deal more. They told me that if the captain wanted a man in the long field to change over, he practically had to send him a telegram. I thought this at the time a humorous exaggeration. Afterwards I was not so sure. There were many features of that ground about which exaggeration would have been a sheer waste of breath. From mid-off to deep square-leg was a gradient like Porlock Hill.

Patsy Hendren used to tell a tale of playing on such a ground somewhere up country in Queensland. They put him out in the long field, down among the foothills, and there he spent a pleasant time, drowsing in the sun with never a ball coming near him all the afternoon. Suddenly, he was awakened by a yell. High in the sky soared the ball, a colossal ballooning hit. Then it began to come down, slowly, slowly . . . Patsy turned this way and that, trying to make up his mind; then he darted forward and ran swiftly up Hill 60 to bring off a spectacular catch. The only unsatisfactory feature of the matter was that, when he finally breasted the slope, he discovered that his own side was batting.

Our ground was unconventional and our batsmen were

unconventional. At Lord's you hear the bell ring and then, after a solemn hush, the umpires walk slowly out, the embodiment of solemn dignity. After that, the fielding side comes out in spotless white flannels. And finally, the batsmen emerge, as it might be Hutton and Sheppard or some pair equally worthy of solemn greeting. The scene has impressiveness but, it might be argued, lacks colour.

In those old days of the early twenties, when our opening pair went forth to bat, the picture was different. As England then were based on Hobbs and Sutcliffe, so we were based on Bob Jason and Dickie Brush . . . Instead of white flannels they wore ordinary lounge waistcoats and trousers of rich, creaking corduroy. True, they wore belts, but beneath their waistcoats they also wore braces, a combination which indicates an essentially serious view of life. They had nicely contrasted styles in neckwear too. Bob, as became the highly respectable landlord of The Jolly Cricketers wore a high choker collar, while Dickie who, with a one-horse wagon, operated a local carrier service, allowed himself a less formal habit and wore a football jersey—colours, Aston Villa—open at the neck. The club owned at that stage of its history one pair of pads, of a delicate shade of coffee-colour, normally to be shared between two batsmen. At the beginning of the innings, however, Dickie buckled them both on, for Mr. Jason invariably wore leggings.

In some ways Mr. Jason was the more remarkable batsmen of the two. You remember the satirical observation that Verity had the batsmen in two minds. Conversely, Mr. Jason had the bowlers in two minds. They did not know whether to treat him as a right-hander or a left-hander and, to tell the truth, Mr. Jason did not appear to know either. He was, frankly, not particular which way he stood; sometimes it was one way and sometimes the other, but it made no difference one way or the other, because he always held his bat cross-handed, like a Victorian young lady playing *The Battle March of Delhi* on the family piano.

Sometimes the opposition objected to Mr. Jason's periodic changes of front, but he would demand the elementary right of the freeborn Englishman to express his personality in the manner best pleasing to himself. There was nothing against it, he argued, in the laws of cricket; indeed, he had a perfect right to bat, as the bowler had to bowl, over or round the wicket.

In this contention he would be firmly supported by the home umpire . . . Mr. Jason was no Bradman with the bat, but he was a master with his legs, or rather with his leggings—in the field Mr. Jason's leggings were a potent weapon. For one thing, the ball used to bounce off them as though stricken and stunned, and for another, he had made a private arrangement with the scorer—who was his wife's niece, a charming girl with an uninhibited sense of arithmetic—that all leg byes should be counted to his personal credit . . .

By way of contrast, Dickie Brush was of the active, rather than the passive type. Dickie Brush was outsize. Like the village blacksmith you could see him swinging his heavy sledge with measured beat and slow. He had a backlift rather like that of the gentleman employed by Mr. J. Arthur Rank, for some reason that escapes me, to hit a gong at the beginning of a film. He must have hit a good deal of air in his time, but when the ball hit the middle of the bat, the effect was positively atomic.

I remember a particular over which I underwent while keeping wicket behind him in a practice game. It was a rich experience. The first three balls he missed altogether, but the draught caused by his swing was rather like that of an express train hurtling through a country station. The fourth ball arrived before he was quite ready and he hit it for six in the course of a practice swing. Off the fifth, which also took him unawares, he hit another six, this time with growing irritation against a bowler who was evidently trying to deceive him. As the sixth ball was delivered it seemed to occur to Dickie that this was his last chance. He leapt into the air as it pitched, and dispatched it over the bowler's head, over the pavilion, and over the hedge of the next field but one, where it probably ended its days in a thicket of nettles, for it was certainly never seen again. And I heard Dickie mutter as it went, " Crikey, if I'd only got hold of that one! "

Some village cricket is serious and some is plumb ridiculous, but almost all of it, seen through a nostalgic haze, has a charm of its own. This is a sentimental view, but a sentimental view can, on occasion, be the right one. In retrospect, the sun was

always shining, the sky was always blue, the landscape was always pleasantly English. In actual fact, the sun was not always shining and the sky was by no means blue. Indeed, we must have spent many hours in our cold pavilion, watching a grey sky through rain-spattered windows and exercising the Christian virtue of hope. Much good talk has from time to time taken place in wet-windowed pavilions large and small . . .

It was on such occasions that the venerable Nodder, our umpire, was prevailed on to tell his own story of how he had won the local Derby match with Dinnington Parva by sheer strength of character. Nodder, besides being an arbiter of the cricket field, was also a leading member of the church choir and had even been known to brighten up the responses by substituting the word Over for Amen.

"Well, there it was," Nodder would recall, "last ball of the over—last ball o' the match—and them with nine wickets down. Old Bill Cramp he puts down a reg'lar rip-roarer of a ball and it hits their man such a wallop on the pad that ole Bill is too excited to appeal. But I kept my head. 'How's that?' I sings out in my tenor voice. 'Out!' I says in my bass voice and out he goes . . ."

On about the fifteenth hearing of this tale I ventured to suggest—still being incredibly young and foolish—that I thought I had once seen something like it in *Punch*.

"Ar," said Nodder, "you did, did you?" He paused a moment and demanded conclusively, "And where d'you reckon *they* got it from?"

Our pavilion was in itself something of a curiosity. It was an ancient railway carriage that had lost its wheels in changing over from the old Great Eastern Railway to the London and North Eastern. In its ordinary working life it did duty as a railway station, on the "little" line which, when it bothered, connected the main Cambridge line with the beautiful village of Thaxted. Recently this "little" line has been closed down by British Railways. The motive, no doubt, was jealousy.

In those days, however, it not merely functioned, it allowed us to use one of its stations as a cricket pavilion. After all, there were not many trains on a Saturday afternoon. There was the "up" at four-thirty-five and the sound of her whistle, other things being equal, suggested a good time for declaring. After all, if the batting side hadn't made forty-five by then they weren't likely to, anyway.

After that the service tended to lapse until Monday morning. But the fact that we used the station as a pavilion did not interfere

with the business of any passengers who were eccentric enough to wish to travel by the 4.35.

Here came those ministering ladies of village cricket, the tea ladies, wheeling sacrificial urns in perambulators. It was a place for greeting and social intercourse. If the game happened to be at an exciting stage after all, the engine driver was a civilised man—the distinguishing mark of a civilised man being that he is not always in such a blasted hurry. Now, I believe, the club has a more utilitarian pavilion, an ex-army hut, at the other side of the twelve-acre, and British Railways have left our pavilion, if not to the owls and pelicans, at least to any old hen that opts to lay astray.

But the game goes on. The tradition remains and we who are older and like to pretend that in the old days we were more colourful characters than today's youngsters, are glad that it remains. In hundreds of villages, on tree-shaded greens, or in willow-fringed meadows, the game is going on and younger folks are playing it. The happiest day of their lives? Maybe, or maybe not, at the time. But they will have been, when the harshness of today softens into yesterday, *they will have been.*

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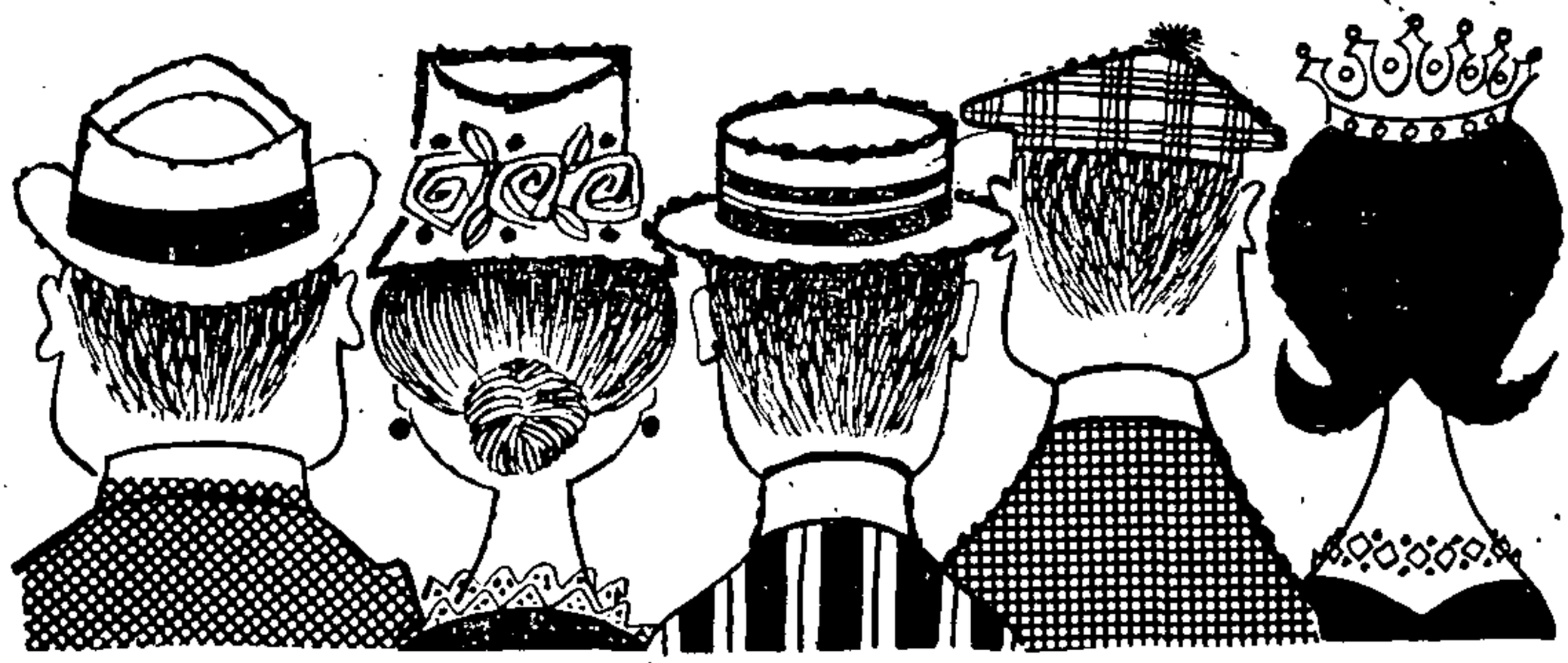
Augustus and his faithful hound



You meet such interesting people!

Graham Sutherland began his career as an engineer, and underneath his soft brushwork there still are ruled lines that lend a cubistic solidity to his work. He has designed posters, ceramics, a tapestry for the new Coventry cathedral. His portraits of Winston Churchill, Somerset Maugham, Lord Beaverbrook, are masterful interpretations of character. But when Sutherland works impulsively he always returns to surreal scenes of natural forms.

His aim, says Sutherland, is "to catch and pin down the essence of that aspect of reality which moves me—to fix and mark out the shape of my sensations." Sutherland's sensations when he faces nature are far from rhapsodic. He is like a perverse Picasso run riot in a vegetable patch: he draws polyps plopping limply atop earthen walls, a skull looking as if it were a spider's web peering from a lattice of green leaves. Once he caught a huge toad, put it in a jar and made fifty drawings of it. "He was a very bad sitter," said Sutherland. "He turned his back on me all the time." *Time Magazine*, 22 *May*, 1964

Charles

When the dead King's son came back, the nation behaved like a family who had not had a holiday for twenty years. Charles II arrived on his birthday, riding through ways strewed with flowers, the bells ringing, the streets hung with tapestry, fountains running with wine. The King was seven hours passing through the City, "even from two in the afternoon till nine at night. I stood in the Strand," says Evelyn, "and beheld it and blessed God . . . for such a Restoration was never seen in the

mention of any history . . . nor so joyful a day and so bright ever seen in this nation."

After that reception it was inevitable that Charles should be labelled for all time " the Merry Monarch," if only because he had made everyone remember that Puritania had once been called " Merry England." Yet merry is an odd label for the cynical, tolerant masquerader whom nobody could intimidate and nobody surprise.

. . . and his Nell

Pepys in his diary: 1st May, 1667. To Westminster: in the way meeting many milk-maids with their garlands upon their pails, dancing with a fiddler before them; and saw pretty Nelly standing at her lodgings door in Drury Lane in her smock sleeves and bodice, looking upon one: she seemed a mighty pretty creature . . .

Nell Gwynne has gone on seeming a mighty pretty creature to the English from that day to this. They did not love her because she was a fine comedienne and wit: they loved her because, as Mrs. Aphra Behn told her to her face, she had " an eternal sweetness, youth and air . . . as if you were made on purpose to put the whole world into good humour," and because she remembered her beginnings and the troubles of poor folk.

CLEMENCE DANE, *London Has a Garden*

Olivier—Othello

Many a fine actor has quailed before Shakespeare's *Othello*; he makes such frightening physical demands, as well as those of a noble yet basically primitive character. Sir Laurence Olivier is magnificently equipped for the physical illusion, and the impact of his performance in the new production at the National Theatre comes largely from the shock of his total Africanness. It is astonishing. Useless to argue that the Moors are on the whole a light-skinned people—Shakespeare's Othello is *black*, and Olivier plays him as a prince of darkest Africa on whom the veneer of Venetian manners has only a precarious hold.

Olivier has *thought* himself clean into the skin of a black man, and from the moment he appears, moving with a rhythmic, loose-jointed gait almost more West Indian than African, he charms the eye, the senses and the understanding. One sees only too plainly what Desdemona saw in him; also that sexual jealousy is the one emotion likely to send him mad.

PAT WALLACE, *Tatler*

An Author

Michael Gilbert is fifty-two, 6 feet 3 inches tall—a good deal taller than the fiction he writes, which is notable for its atmosphere of actuality and convincing detail. He first took to crime—or at any rate to writing about it—just before the last war, when he was articled to a firm of solicitors and very hard up. He is now a flourishing solicitor and the highly successful author of several crime novels and television plays, plus a great number of short stories. He lives with his wife and children in an old rectory in Kent and does most of his writing on the train which takes him to and from his Lincoln's Inn office.

. . . and his work!

"I have a confession to make. I am somewhat in favour of inaccuracy. I agree with the writer who replied coldly, to a correspondent: 'In my book, the Law Courts *are* in High Holborn.' Why not? It was his book. We are living in his world and age, and not in our own. If it suits him to make a No. 13 bus go from Croydon to High Barnet, let him do so.

"So strongly did I feel this, that in each of my first four books I took pains to insert a deliberate—although absolutely inessential—inaccuracy. I invented a clock in Lincoln's Inn which chimed the hour. I put Golders Green on the wrong branch of the Northern Line. The result was gratifying. I got a stream of letters from readers in all parts of this country, and a few from other countries as well. Most of them were considerate enough to start their letters by saying how much they had enjoyed the book. I got the proof, so dear to the heart of a beginner, that people actually read his books. Nowadays my inaccuracies are all unintentional. And I'm quite unrepentant about *them* too." ★

Garbo

What, when drunk, one sees in other women, one sees in Garbo sober. She is woman apprehended with all the pulsating clarity of one of Aldous Huxley's mescalin jags. To watch her is to achieve direct, cleansed perception of something which, like a flower or a fold of silk, is raptly, unassertively, and beautifully itself. Nothing intrudes between her and the observer except the observer's neuroses: her contribution is calm and receptiveness, an absorbent repose. Tranced by the ecstasy of existing, she gives to each onlooker what he needs: her largesse is intarissable. KENNETH TYNAN, *Tynan on Theatre*

★ *Michael Gilbert's next book starts in Argosy soon. Our sub-editors have been alerted and their blue pencils sharpened!*

His eyes on her . . . as if they were hands

BIG POLACK

BY HARRY MARK PETRAKIS

I AM Mike Komarski, the one they call Big Polack—but never to my face. I am night-shift craneman in the steel-works, in the mill of great thick plates. I stand at the levers in my cabin, feeling the giant crane pincers heave and raise the tons of slab. I move above the fire and fury as God moves above the earth. I see the men who labour beneath me, small and helpless animals in need of my strength. My hands are iron-knuckled upon the levers. I do my job well.

On nights, walking to the mill, I pass the still house in which she lives. I see no light from any of her windows, yet I know she is there. I see the smoke of her stove rising from the chimney. Somewhere in the darkness of the house she sits mourning her dead. Somewhere in the darkness her black tears wet the pale hollows of her cheeks.

In the night, riding the hurtling crane, feeling its shudders and smashings, I am torn with thinking of her. Below me in the mill the great furnaces hiss and belch the hot glowing slabs on to the rollers. The world is flame and thunder.

I pull the cord and release the scream of the whistle. Does she hear, lying awake in the coldness of her lonely bed? Can she know it is my prayer and the cry of my tormented love?

Natalie . . .

It is twilight and the shifts are changing. The men of the mills walk beneath my windows. Some shuffle wearily with their heads down and some laugh the wild laughter of men and others walk alone.

Now the winter is almost gone, and in the little vacant lots the first buds break fresh upon the wind-whipped trees. The dull winter-faces of children shine with remembered visions of spring.

Each morning the daylight comes earlier to my bed. But the nights are long and dark. In the big bed in which we once lay together the loneliness presses about me with sharp stones of sorrow.

He was lean and swift with life and most comely in his nakedness. Now a cold grave holds him far from my arms.

Sometimes in the night I wake with a start from moments of uneasy sleep. I light no lamp because in the blackness of the room all that had passed might have been a dream—and if I but stretched my fingers I would touch him beside me—until outside in the night the crane from the mill screams like an animal in the darkness. Then I know he is dead.

Mike . . .

When she was still a child, no more than eleven or twelve, in the candled church against the chants of the Mass, even then her hair tumbled black about her shoulders, and her legs below the cloth of her child's coat gleamed with the nakedness of sin before my eyes.

How many times did I walk past the schoolyard within the cloisters of the fierce, black-robed sisters, hoping to see her at play for even a few moments . . . As each year passed and her breasts swelled to fit the cupping of a man's hands, my thoughts were dark hunger. I knew I could not love her and God . . . Holy Mary, Mother of all women, have mercy, for I banished God.

Lying in the bed beside the strange woman, feeling the sweat dry in chilled fingers on my flesh, my wanting still a brutal knot unsatisfied after a thousand soiled and stinking beds . . .

To forget her, Holy Mother Mary—believe me as a man who gave up God because I could not shame him—to forget her I did these things, and in the end I killed. But, in your boundless compassion, you must understand what becomes of a man's soul when he sees his love stolen by another.

His name was Manuel, a boy near her own age, with black, wavy hair. I saw them often together and felt the fury raging in my body as he held her hand, and they walked as if they were children unaware of the dark. I heard her laugh with him, the wanton movement of her lips in pleasure, and after that no bottle or woman or fear of hell could erase from before me the vision of her awakened body.

They were married in grey September, in the church of St. Mark. I stood far at the back in the shadow hearing the blasphemy of the Mass that gave her to another.

On their way from the church she looked once to where I stood, shadowed, and her hair was well brushed beneath her white veil and the wildness I felt to be mine smothered under the simper of their youth.

That night I drank to die, and raged among the painted whores and rose from one wild bed to seek another. I remember lost faces and bruised mouths and stone-nippled breasts, and the dawn came and I woke in some alley among the dung and garbage and I was not dead.

Natalie . . .

I saw him in the shadows in the church, the day in September that Manuel and I were married. I felt the strange dread I often remembered in the nearness of that huge and silent man.

Long ago in the schoolyard as a child, I felt his shadow as if a cloud had crossed the sun. In the twilight I ran to the store for lemons for Aunt Ferata's tea and, passing the dark mouth of a hidden alley, felt the uneasy cold in my bones and knew he was near.

He never spoke. . Only once in all those years did he ever approach me: one spring while I was playing in our garden beside the tulips he passed outside the gate and picked up something from the ground and then came to the fence. Wordlessly, he stretched out his hand holding my doll that I must have dropped. I was afraid, but he held the doll so gently I walked slowly to the fence and for the first time saw his face clearly. Dark and pocked and uglier than any face I had ever seen, and his eyes on me as if they were hands.

I screamed and ran to the house, and Aunt Ferata came from the doorway. He dropped the doll and walked quickly away.

Aunt Ferata crossed herself and took me into the house and spoke of him as a man condemned by God. She would not let me touch the doll but burnt it where he had dropped it.

Many times after that I felt him near, but I never saw him close again. As I grew older I came to pity him because of his size and his ugliness, and because he indeed might have been a man condemned by God to walk forever alone.

But Manuel and I were married and there was no lasting dread. There was only our love and the smooth brown flesh colour of his body and the hard frantic suppleness of his ribs upon mine in the sweet, sweet night. Our small house was locked and we were secured against the city and hidden from the great black mill buildings that threw long shadows across our porch.

Until Manuel started work that autumn in the mills . . .

Mike . . .

The work of the devil, I swear. It must have been. He was a labourer, one of thousands in the mills. He could have been put to work in any of a hundred places. But it was to the plate mill —my mill—they sent him.

Every third week he worked my night-shift, and when I mounted my crane I saw him. He was lean and dark, with white teeth that flashed in his brown face when he laughed. I hated him most when he laughed, remembering her laughter.

On those nights I marked every move he made within the mill. I swear I do not know when I first meant to kill him. He had taken what was mine, had defiled what belonged to me, and I wished him dead but no more than that . . .

Until a night not long after the beginning of the turn. They were charging slabs from the boneyard, odd-sized fragments of many heats that could be rolled very fast. Antonio Perenza signalled for the crane near the wall. When I came overhead I saw the boy. He was standing alone at the side of the slabs to be moved, waiting to hook the chains of the crane.

The whistle screamed in my head. The crane moved with life of its own. I remember him hooking the chains about the slabs. He looked up and flashed his white-toothed smile and signalled for the raise. My hands squeezed bloodless around the levers. The slabs rose a few feet and swung slightly and he stepped towards the wall. The chains twisted and the slabs swung wider, and he stood pinned against the wall with his face turned to God. He tried to scream but it was too late. The slabs swung hard and crushed him against the wall with a great rocking shatter that tossed and shook the crane cabin like a boat is tossed on a stormy sea. The load swung away and the smashed body slumped down the wall to the cinders.

When I screamed they must have thought I screamed in despair for him. But the cry of blood and death that burst from my throat was for her.

I came down from the crane. A strange silence hung over the mill, and by the hundreds men came slowly and silently to see. I cried out that the levers had jammed. Antonio Perenza, on his knees beside the body, looked up at me with his face dark as night. We went into the foreman's office to make out the report. When we came out they were carrying the covered stretcher to an ambulance.

Burn for burn, wound for wound, blood for blood.

I had killed for her.

Natalie . . .

When they brought me word Manuel was dead I would not believe them. I ran through the streets to the undertaker's—the same old man who had buried my father and mother when I was just a child. Perenza was there and Budny and they did not wish to let me see. I screamed at them that he was mine and belonged to me. They took me downstairs to a stark white-walled room with a sheet-covered body upon a table. They would not let me go close or lower the sheet.

I did not believe them because they would not let me see. They thought words were enough to convince me that my Manuel was dead.

But later I believed. Beside the dark and tomb-faced women fingering rosaries and mumbling prayers under their breath, I believed. In the passing hours with the changing of shifts and the mill men silent beneath my windows, I believed. In the grief and despair that came like knives across my flesh, I believed. In the lonely and desolate wind against the window, I believed. In the cold bed alone while the women sat outside the bedroom door and prayed, I believed.

Then I cried for a long time, pressing my face tightly into my pillow so the old dark women that smelt of death would not hear.

Mike . . .

I am watched by the friends of the boy I killed. Their sullen, accusing faces follow me coming and going from my crane. They are not satisfied although the report listed his death as an accident. They suspect what only she must know.

If they go to her, she will remember all the years I have been her shadow. She will remember the crane screaming in the night.

She will tell them. Then let them pay the debt with blood. For I banished God; I plunged myself into dark water, and night and fury and the wild hawks wait to feed on my eyes.

But the days hang like an empty noose and they do nothing. I am still alive and untouched. In the shadowed room in which I hide from the light of day, I wait for some sound or movement, but in the evening I am still alone and alive. I walk the dark street to the mill and feel a shudder through my body at the mouth of every shadow-hidden alley. Only in my crane do I feel secure for a little while.

I have not taken a woman since the night of his death. Drink is sour in my belly and food is without taste.

I am Mike Komarski, the one they call Big Polack—but never to my face. I will not ask for mercy. If it is God's will I die, I am ready to die. For what I have done is murder and sin and yet I do not care. I still think only of her.

Natalie . . .

Manuel's friends have spoken to me about his death. Perenza, best man at our wedding, came stern-faced with others cold and angry beside him. They asked if I knew of any reason why the craneman called Big Polack should have wished to kill Manuel. This they wanted to know to answer blood with blood and death with death.

I need only have spoken of the years I remembered that big and ugly man. Only have told of the crane screaming in the night. I know why he killed Manuel. And like the final piece in a puzzle of nightmare and horror the years fall into place. I understand why he always walked in my shadow. Why even as a child I felt dread in the twilight. How he wanted me when I could not yet know what wanting meant.

Now in the evening I sit hidden behind the curtain in my room, waiting for him to pass on his way to the mill. When he appears suddenly out of darkness, walking slowly beneath a streetlight, I tremble in the dark room. His body is huge, there is something terrible and tormented in the way he stares at the house. I cannot see his face clearly and yet I remember his eyes I had seen once as a child—eyes that I felt as if they were hands on my body. I have the feeling he can see me through the walls of the dark room. Long after he is gone I sit unmoving and watch scraps of paper blown by the night wind along the deserted walks.

I have not told Perenza and the others. Each night as I sit hidden and wait for him to pass, I tremble in cold and horror, at myself, and what has sealed my tongue.

Mike . . .

She has not told them. I am sure of that now. Why in the name of God has she not told them?

She sits with the curtains drawn. She watches for me. When I pass the shade wavers. I know she watches me. Why has she not told them? If she forgives me because she is merciful, I spit on her damn' pity. There must be more than that.

Into my dark wondering comes a flash of light like the striking of silent lightning in a pitch-black sky.

When they told her, she must have remembered all the years I had been so close. She must have known in that moment

the measure of my love. She must have known that I killed for her. Yes, the devil be my witness, she must know and want me too. Otherwise, why should she not tell? A dozen men would have volunteered to knife me where I slept. It must be she does not wish me dead.

My eyes were the eyes of the blind and my feet the feet of the lame. Suddenly I am filled with all the rooted strength of the earth. I will go to her. In the dark so she will not see my face clearly. I will take her body as the parched earth takes rain after long fierce drought. And all the barren years will bear wild fruit.

Let all the serpents of hell come for me in their time, but first we will be together.

Natalie . . .

I think he will come soon. He must know I have spared his life.

I think sometimes I have gone mad. I am too much alone. I go to bed with a scissors beneath my pillow waiting for him to come. Yet I do not fool myself that all I feel for him is hate. O dear God, if it was only that!

He killed my Manuel. He killed because he could not bear to see me in the arms of another. How anguished must be his love . . . To what black and hidden land beyond all sunlight, does he seek to take me?

I know his face is dark and that his eyes burn like flame—I remember. I tell myself he is a monster and then I recall the years he has waited, always silent, and in the end how he killed. I think sometimes I have gone mad. It must be that. I cannot endure this horror which fills my days and nights. I watch him pass in the street outside my window. I hear the wild screaming of the crane and my body cries out.

I think he will come soon.

Antonio Perenza . . .

There are things best left unwritten. There are things best left unsaid.

The wife of Budny came to me. She had taken fresh eggs to the girl's house in the early morning. There was no answer to her knock. The door was open but she had been afraid to enter.

I went quickly to the house. The house that so short a time before had known joy and love. The fire had gone out in the stove, and the rooms were damp and cold. In the bedroom the two of them were on the bed and both were dead.

His great body lay beside her slender one, partially concealing her nakedness. His cheek rested strangely upon her breast.

Scissor-handles stuck from his back, the blades buried deeply in his flesh. Where she found the strength to stab to the hilt, only the devil knew.

He had not died at once. He had lived long enough to put his huge hand about her slim throat and take her life as well. So they must have died together, flesh folded upon flesh.

I swear I did not know the girl upon the bed. Her black hair wild across the pillow seemed not to belong to the girl Manuel had married. Beside the monster she had become something out of darkness, born of animals in the field, of forbidden objects of desire, of bloodstained altars and the rites for pagan gods.

I crossed myself and left the room. I sent Budny's wife for the police.

I left the house. In the distance over the dark-gabled roofs of the mill, fire from the furnaces lit the sky. A wind rising, touched my cheeks with the scent of rain.

I walked to church. For a little while I needed to be near God.

There are things best left unwritten. There are things best left unsaid. God help us all who live on this dark and unfathomed earth.

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HEART'S DESIRE

There are two tragedies in life. One is not to get your heart's desire—the other is to get it.

BERNARD SHAW

I grow hot and restive when I read novels about heroines who lie down on banks of heather, submit to a long embrace, and then discover to their great surprise, in the following October, that they are about to have a baby. Certain very definite and very ludicrous things have to be done before one has a baby. One cannot have them with one eye on the sunset and the other eye on the Oxford Book of English Verse.

BEVERLEY NICHOLS, *Down the Garden Path*

Men always want to be a woman's first love—women prefer to be a man's last romance.

OSCAR WILDE

Blood, they say, is thicker than water

RED HAIR AND OYSTERS

BY GERALD KERSH

YOU ALWAYS were such a confounded milksop," said my uncle. "I shall never forget that time when you came down from Cambridge, pure as a lily. I gave you a ten pound note, and told you, 'Here's a tenner, Rodney—go to the West End, find some lively company; have a good time, make a man of yourself!' And out you went, buttoned up like a blessed parson. And you were back by midnight, all flushed . . . What? You're blushing again, are you? Better watch out, Rodney. You make me think of the little train that used to run between Wittingley and Amersham—when the driver blew the whistle, the engine lost steam and stopped. Don't blush; you can't spare the blood for it."

I said, "Oh, Uncle—please!"

But he had no mercy. He was in one of his savage, comic humours. He went right on, in apostrophe, talking to the crystal chandelier, ". . . He comes back by midnight; does this Rodney, all of a glow. I say to myself, 'Well, now, at last this bookworm has made a bit of a fool of himself. About time! Let's have a little vicarious pleasure . . .' And I ask him to tell me how he has spent his evening—not, mark you, that he can have sowed many wild oats between teatime and the Devil's Dancing Hour. 'Been dissipating, Rodney, my boy?' I ask him. And, 'Oh yes, Uncle Arnold!' says this little nobody. And, as I am a living sinner, he puts down nine pounds three-and-six, with—lord help us!—a look of guilt, saying, 'Here is the change!'"

He laughed his great, coarse laugh, and the crystals of that detestable chandelier vibrated with it, seeming to titter in sympathy. "'What in the world,' I ask this tame mouse, 'what in the *world* can a gentleman do, to have an evening in town on sixteen-and-six?'

" And then he tells me, does this Rodney, ' I met my friend, Willikens, of Jesus College, and we went to a picture palace. We saw Rita Anita in *Passion's Plaything*, and after the show we went to a café in Soho and had ham and scrambled eggs.' "

I cried, " Oh, Uncle—"

" Oh, Nephew! " he snarled, glaring at me again. " I decided, from that moment on, that you were a beastly little prig. I promised my dear sister—your unhappy mother—that I'd look after you. Poor girl! Your father, whom she went and married—bolts and bars wouldn't hold her—against all our advice, was a blackguard and a scoundrel and a rogue and a vagabond. But at least he had the decency to go to the devil like a man, if not a gentleman. Whereas you—you whey-faced marigold—"

" Uncle, I cannot help the colour of my hair! " I said.

" You can't help anything, you! " said he. " I wonder that you have the nerve to interrupt me. Oh, you spiritless thing—I'd have thought better of you if you had knocked me down, just now, instead of whimpering, ' Uncle, Uncle, Uncle! ' "

And I could only say, " But, *Uncle*! "

" And yet," my uncle said, " there must be some kind of a spark of spirit in you, somewhere, or you wouldn't have had the nerve to fall in love with this Mavis of yours. Here you are, infatuated, at your age—"

" Uncle, I'm only thirty-nine! " I said—and, to save my life, I could not have stopped my voice breaking—" and it isn't infatuation. It's true love! "

" That would make it a thousand times worse, if it were true. only it isn't. It can't be. True love, indeed—you, of all people! Love, young Rodney, takes blood and fire. All the fire in you has gone into your ridiculous hair; and all the blood in your body you need to blush with . . . Infatuation, I say—don't dare to interrupt—infatuation with a common dancing girl, who gets paid a couple of pounds a week for showing her fat legs to every Tom, Dick, or Harry . . ."

Even if I had not been choked with misery and rage, I dare say I should have held my tongue. My uncle was in one of his moods, and if I had told him that Mavis had slender and beautiful legs, he would have corrected himself into further offensiveness by saying, *I beg your pardon, skinny legs.*

He went on, " Now, if you'd been anything like a man, I'd have been the last to object to your marrying a dancer. I nearly did myself, once—wish I had—she had legs, at least, to recommend her.

" However, let's not waste words. Marry your dancer, and

not only will I strike you out of my will, but I cut off your allowance. Now then! Decide."

"But, Uncle!" I said, "I *love* Mavis, and she loves me."

He said, with a sneer, "You are infatuated with your Mavis, and she is in love with the eight hundred pounds a year I allow you. I ask you, you radish, what else could any full-blooded woman find in you to love?"

I might have said that Mavis was not the type of ballet dancer of my uncle's turbulent youth, being dark and slender, petal-pale and serious. But then he would only have snarled a laugh and cursed himself, saying that it was just as he had thought all along—the girl was anaemic, unfit to breed from, and he would see himself damned before he countenanced such a blend of milk and water.

"Rodney, my boy," he said, "I want your word, here and now. Give up any idea you might have of marrying this girl. If not, I send a note to Coote tomorrow, and that will cost you eight hundred a year while I'm alive, and my money when I'm dead. You know me, Rodney, and my mind's made up . . . Well?"

I said, "I'll do as you say, Uncle Arnold. I'll give her up."

Then he struck the table a blow with his purple fist, and shouted, "I knew you would! Oh, you milksop! If you had defied me, I'd have raised your allowance to twelve hundred, and given you my blessing; and kissed your bride for you. As it is, you stick of rhubarb, your allowance is henceforward reduced to six hundred pounds a year. And let this be a lesson to you . . . True love, eh? And you'd sell it for eight hundred a year!"

"Oh, but, Uncle—" I began.

"—Oh, but, Uncle! Why, do you want to know something? If I had been you, I would have confronted my old uncle with a *fait accompli*. I'd have said, 'Uncle, I have married such-and-such a girl. Take her, or leave her!' And then—I'll tell you something—I'd have been for you one hundred per cent. Oh, you . . .!"

And, of course, it must be at this wrong moment that I find the courage to say, "Uncle, Mavis and I were married three months ago."

He started to puff out his cheeks, but, remembering that his doctor had warned him to control his temper, sucked them in again. When he subsided, I had never seen a more terrifying mixture of malignancy and mirth than his face expressed. He said, "Oh, you did, did you? And you have the gall to tell me so, now?"

I protested, " But, Uncle! You just said—"

" I just said, you worm, that if you had had the spirit to tell me so in the first place, I'd have thought better of you. But no, not you! You've got to sniff and fumble your wormish way, you have; until I let fall a word, and then you're as bold as brass, you copper-headed Thing! . . . Oh, so! You married the girl, did you? Well, if I could half-guess that she loved you for yourself (as she might have loved me for myself) instead of for the money I provide you with, blast my eyes but I would have allowed you twenty-four hundred a year! But as it is, just because you're such a sniveller, I cut you down to . . . did I say six hundred a year? Beg pardon, four hundred. Your allowance is cut in two, young Rodney. And for every time, hereafter, you whine *Oh, Uncle*, I cut you another fifty. Now then! "

He knew my old servile habit; he tore the protest out of me, as surely as if he had me on the rack.

" Oh, Uncle! " I cried.

" Three hundred and fifty pounds a year," he said, with satisfaction.

" You don't do me justice," I said. " You have always made a mockery of me, just because I have red hair. Keep your dirty money! Damn you, keep it! "

His old servant, coming in with a great silver tray at that moment, stood aghast. But my uncle laughed, and said, " A show of spirit, Rodney, what? Back you go to four hundred a year . . . Bring in the oysters, Lambert! "

Lambert put down the tray. There were three oval silver platters, each platter indented at the periphery with twelve deep hollows. In each hollow lay a fat Colchester oyster in the deep shell. In his ceremonious way, Lambert uncorked a bottle of Chablis, and poured a little into my Uncle Arnold's glass. He, sniffing and mouthing the wine, grunted, " Sound! . . . Lambert, wine to Mr. Rodney." Then, to me, with a sardonic twist of the mouth, " You won't take an oyster, by any chance, will you, Rodney? "

I said, " Not for any consideration, thank you, Uncle Arnold. You know oysters disagree with me. They make me ill. No, thanks, really! "

He was at me again. " Oysters disagree with him! " he said, to the chandelier. " Disagree! As if any self-respecting oyster would condescend to agree or disagree with this grain of grit! An oyster would turn him into a seed pearl for a little girl's bracelet . . . Oh, bah! Last of the season—isn't it, Lambert? "

`Lambert said, " The last oysters of the season, Sir Arnold. This

is the thirtieth of April. `We'll not have oysters again until there is an R in the month—September first, Sir Arnold, as you know."

When Lambert had left the room, my uncle grumbled, "May—June—July—August . . . four months, before the oyster season opens in the autumn. And what am I to live on until then? Chicken, I suppose . . ." Then he glowered at me, and said, "Oysters disagree with you, Rodney, do they? They make you ill, what?"

"Yes, Uncle," I said. "I am what they call allergic to shellfish. They make me . . . they give me convulsions."

"Then I'll tell you what," my uncle said. "Here's three dozen oysters, the last of the season. I'm going to eat two dozen. You eat the third dozen, and I'll give you back your eight hundred a year. What say?"

The very smell of the oysters nauseated me. I could only say, "I can't, I won't!"

Eating greedily, my Uncle Arnold said, "I'll tell you what, young Rodney: for every oyster you eat, I'll raise your allowance fifty pounds a year. Come on, now!" And he held out, on a three-pronged fork, a fat Colchester.

"Go to the devil!" I cried, starting back, and striking the fork out of his hand.

He grinned, taking up another fork, and said, "Spirit! Bravo! Your allowance is now four hundred and fifty."

"Oh, Uncle!"

"Four hundred," said he, swallowing another oyster. "Oh, dear me, how we go to the dogs, poor us! . . . What wouldn't I give, now, for a Saddlebag! You don't know what that is, do you, Rodney?" My uncle slavered most unpleasantly, in reminiscence. "You take a great, thick, tender steak, and slit it down the middle on two sides so that it opens like a pocket. Stuff it with eight or ten succulent Whitstable oysters, with their juice, and sew up the open edges. Grill, preferably over charcoal.

"Oh, the very idea of it turns *your* stomach, doesn't it? We used to wash it down with porter, and chase it with port, you milksop . . . And all the damned quacks allow me, now, is fish and white meat. Not even salt. My blood pressure is high, they say, and my arteries hard. I never noticed that my arteries were hard."

Here the old man held out a gnarled left fist, bulging with blue veins. He touched one of these veins with the forefinger of the other hand, and said, quite pathetically, "Springy as a pneumatic tyre. What's hard about that? . . . Doctor says red meat and wine will make me drop in my tracks. Salt, too, they deny

me. And what is life without salt? . . . *No excitement*, they say. So what is left?' Other people's excitement, vicarious pleasure. And you, Rodney, deny me even that. You vegetable! At least I can live to watch you wriggle . . .

' An oyster would make him ill. Go to bed, Rodney, go to bed. I'm sick to the heart at the sight of you! Go away!"

He looked so lonely as he sat there, feeling the big blue veins in his clasped hands, that I said, " Oh, my dear Uncle, forgive me if I have offended you—"

"—What was that you said?"

" Oh, Uncle—"

"—I thought you would come around to that again. Three hundred and fifty a year it is now. Go to bed."

Such was Sir Arnold Arnold, my uncle: a brutal old man, who had lived only for pleasure; a savage hedonist, whose appetites had outlived the means of gratifying them. Here he sat, at eighty, with half a million in the bank, and nothing to look forward to but the oyster season next September. For the fear of death was upon him. The doctors had warned him that, although he might be good for another ten years of life—if he took care of himself—a little over-indulgence in food, or wine, or emotional excitement could kill him as quickly and as surely as a bullet in the heart. Much as I hated him that evening, I was sorry for him.

I thought of his many kindnesses to me—he may have been a ruffian, but his heart was in the right place—and, although he had just ruined me, I forgave him. In a way, I loved him—even admired him; and if I ever hated him, it must have been because I envied him.

I swear, I never really meant to kill my uncle.

. . . I could not sleep. I lay awake, reproaching myself, attacking myself from every angle. There was no doubt about it, my uncle was right in his estimate of my character. I *was* a milksop, a weakling, a vegetable. I *did* cut a ridiculous figure. I *had* made a fool of myself that very evening, with my evasions, and my confessions which were not confessions . . .

Only Mavis understood me, because she was sensitive, too. It was she who made it clear to me that I was not really a coward; only sensitive. She loved the colour of my hair, she said, because it reminded her of something out of Dubinushki's setting for the *Valse des Fleurs* . . . My heart ached then as I thought of Mavis.

She had had a hard life, poor girl. Almost literally, she had danced herself out of nowhere.

Hey, wait a minute! I said to myself, trying to reason with myself. *What do you mean, out of nowhere? She is still nowhere. But she relies upon you to help her dance her way somewhere.*

Mavis depended upon me so absolutely. She had such faith in me, and relied so utterly upon my given word—and I had sworn to see her through her career. It is generally an excellent thing to have a woman pin all her faith and hope on you, but it may be sometimes a very bad thing. It takes a broad back to bear the weight of a woman's trust. A woman's unstinted faith may put a strong man's head among the stars; on the other hand, it may put a weak man's head into the gas oven. And I am a weak man.

Yes, I contemplated suicide that night in my uncle's house; and I wish I had had the courage to commit it . . .

I had come, paying my duty-visit, with the intention of borrowing a little money, a matter of some few hundred pounds. Before I knew Mavis, I had regarded myself as quite a rich man: my uncle allowed me eight hundred pounds a year, and over and above that I had my salary, four hundred pounds a year from the High Commissioner's office where I worked. But after I fell in love with Mavis, somehow I could never make ends meet.

I met her at a meeting of the Little Ballet Group, in Russell Square. She performed the dance Riabouchinska used to do, with the little metal fawn . . . only Mavis was smaller than Riabouchinska: an animated ivory figurine, most beautiful! Mavis lived, she told me, only for The Ballet. But her health was not very good; one of her lungs was questionable—she had had a hard time of it in her early youth.

When I went to congratulate her, after the dance, and saw her weeping so forlornly in the little dressing-room, it was as if a hand came out of the foggy night and squeezed my heart into my throat.

Mavis had such humility . . . Now, here is a joke: it was I who said to Mavis, "You must not wait and hope; you must insist, demand!" *I*, mark you!

She insisted. She demanded. I made Mavis hard. Soon my twelve hundred pounds a year was nothing.

I do not know whether Mavis had overestimated my fortune. I am sure I made my financial position pretty clear: eight hundred a year from my uncle, four hundred a year from my office.

But when Mavis and I came to be together, the money went like water. There had to be supper parties, cocktail parties, and luncheon parties; because she had to meet people. And could

she meet people in a shabby dress? Of course not. Again, could we live in three little rooms in Knightsbridge? Knightsbridge, yes; three rooms, no. We needed a big lounge, and impressive furniture.

I got into debt. I mortgaged myself. And, at last, when the dressmakers, and the other tradesmen, were pressing for settlement of their accounts, I had gone to my uncle to borrow five hundred pounds, and found myself with my allowance cut in two.

Mavis would have something to say about this!

I had not lied when I told my uncle that I could not live without her. She was all I had ever loved. Weary of turning over in my mind what I should say to her when I returned home, I began to consider ways and means of killing myself.

And then—at half-past three in the morning—someone knocked at my door. Lambert came into my bedroom, and said, "Oh, Master Rodney—Master Rodney—will you come down? Sir Arnold—I mean your uncle—is taken very bad!"

I put on dressing-gown and slippers, and followed him. As I went downstairs, I was aware of a sense of doom.

I wished my uncle dead, yes. I wished him dead, God forgive me, for his worth in money, considering the terms of his will. But I beg you to believe me—do, please, believe me—when I tell you that I loved the old gentleman very dearly, and had no intention of murdering him, as I did, that night . . .

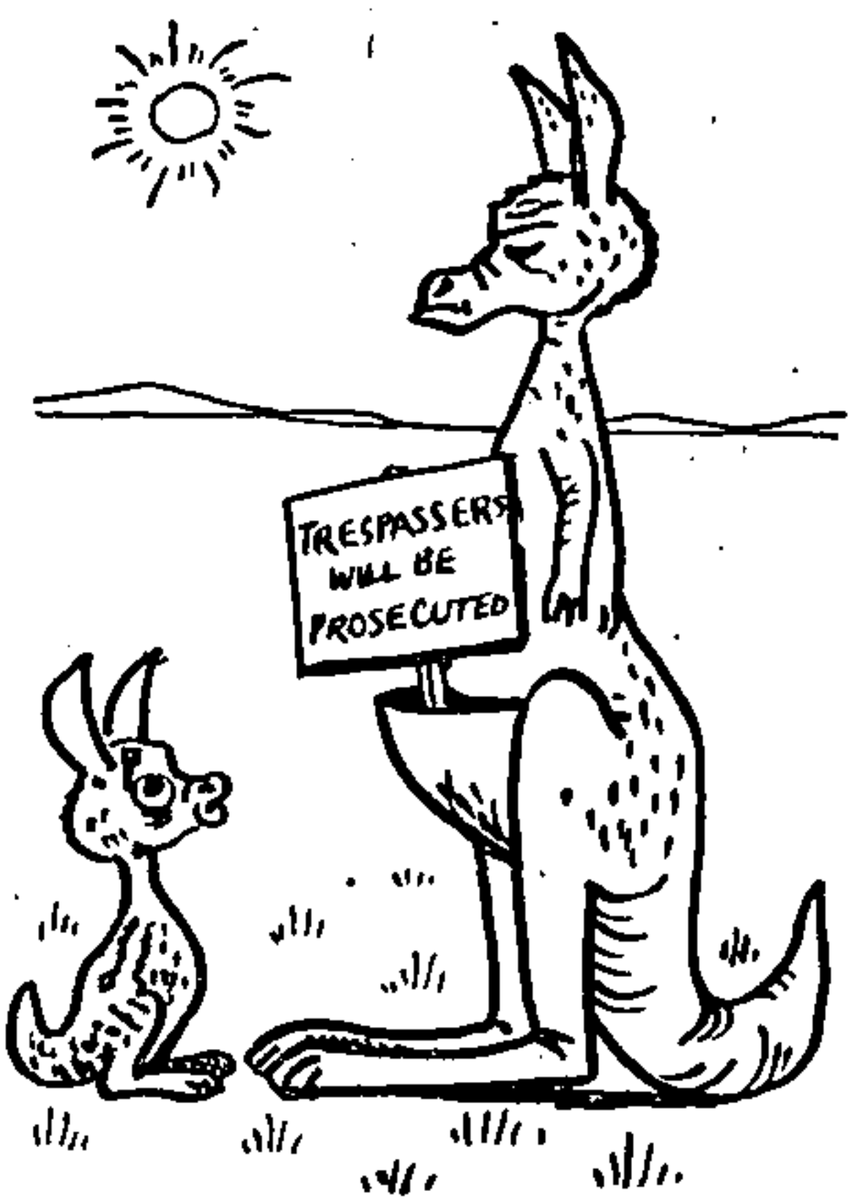
My uncle was lying on his back, with his knees drawn up. His face was blue with pain, but still he fought. He said, gloatingly, "*You* would have been dead three-quarters of an hour ago, I bet! It looks as if you might come into your inheritance yet, you worm."

"What is the matter, Uncle?" I asked.

He said, "I don't know. My belly is hard as a pumpkin, and hurts like hell . . . First I go hot, and then I go cold. It pains Rodney, it pains!"

Then Lambert came in with a hot-water bottle.

"This sounds like appendicitis," I said. "Take that bottle away, and make a pack of crushed ice in a towel."



Even in his agony, my Uncle Arnold sneered, "Male nurse!"

"Call Dr. Gilpin," I said to Lambert.

He hesitated, and said, "I wanted to, sir, but Sir Arnold said not to."

Remember—all I had to do was temporise, humour my uncle in his obstinacy for three or four hours, and he would surely have been dead that day. But I said, "Uncle, you have an appendicitis, very likely burst. Lambert, call Dr. Gilpin this instant!"

"No damned quacks!" my uncle groaned. "It's nothing but a belly-ache. Lambert, don't call Dr. Gilpin, call Mr. Coote. If I die where I lie, I cut this milksop off with a shilling."

That was the nature of the man; do you know, I honoured him for it! But I rose to the occasion, and said, "You may cut me off, or you may cut me on, as you please; I am getting the doctor." And so I did.

The old gentleman was delirious when Dr. Gilpin arrived. The diagnosis was as I had foreseen—a burst appendix, with a serious internal hæmorrhage.

I went with my uncle and the doctor to the Cottage Hospital. The surgeon there said, "We'll pull the old boy through, I dare say. But I'll want somebody to stand by for a transfusion of whole blood . . . How about you?"

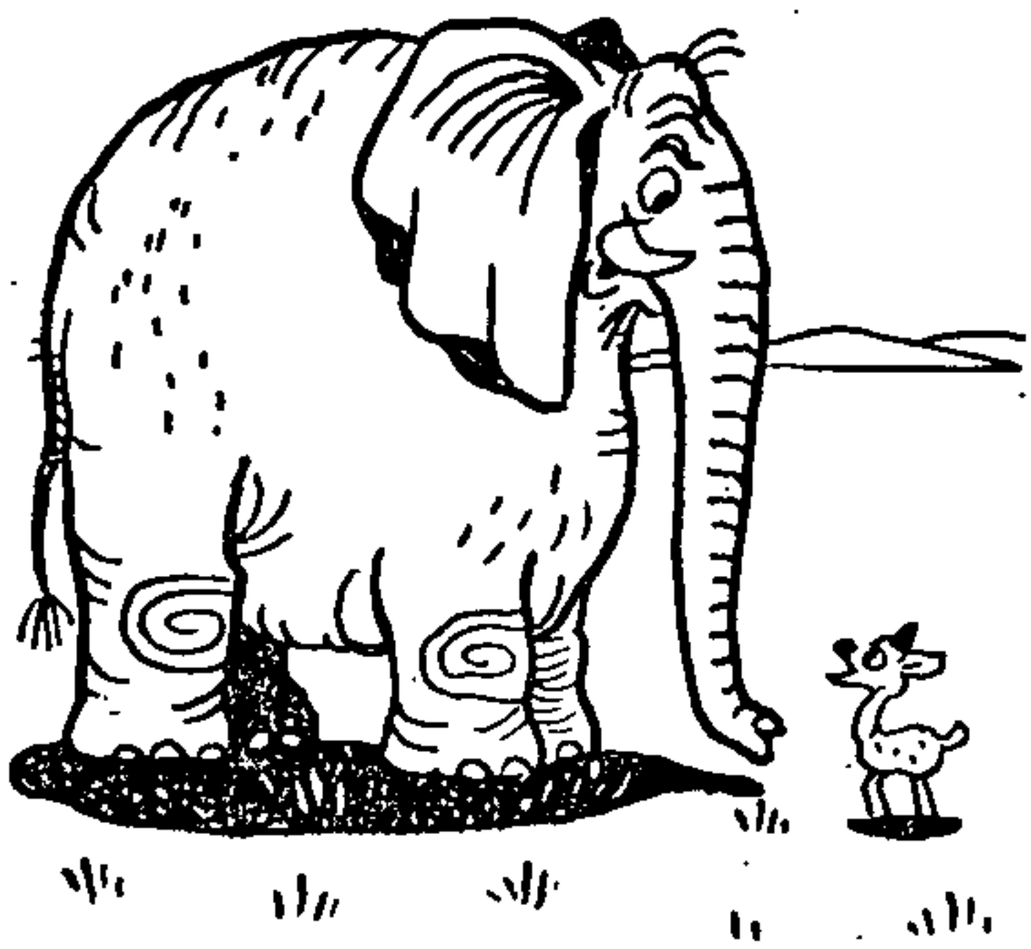
I said, "My blood group is universal O."

"How d'you know?"

"I found that out during the war," I said.

"You'll do," said the surgeon.

At this point I murdered my uncle, Sir Arnold Arnold, for the sake of my love for Mavis, For, you see, an allergy may be transmitted in a transfusion of blood. I spoke the truth when I said that my blood group was Type O, which is universally transfusible. But some devil got hold of my tongue, so that when I intended to say—*I am violently allergic to oysters, and Sir Arnold lives on them; therefore, if he receives my blood in transfusion now—his heart*



"You may not know it, but you're 93 per cent water."

being weak, and his blood pressure high—he will almost certainly die in a fit of asthmatic coughing, or of convulsive colitis when he celebrates the opening of the next oyster season with three dozen Colchesters next September—I was silent.

Premeditation here! When I let them siphon the blood from my arm into the bottle for transfusion, I knew that I was poisoning my uncle as surely as if I had been putting arsenic in his tea.

But I never spoke.

He was conscious by noon, and then he said, "Rodney, my boy, I'm an old man, and a little testy at times. Don't mind every word I say. Blood is thicker than water, old fellow; and you must have good blood in you. You behaved like a man and a gentleman, by God! Bring your Mavis to see me. I dare say she's a nice gel, really. Meantime, send Coote to me. I'm going to give you a thousand pounds for a wedding present."

"Oh, no, Uncle!" I said, almost crying.

"Your allowance, henceforward, is a thousand a year. You're a good boy. Now go home."

Mavis was waiting for me when I got home. She said, "Good lord, Rod! You look like death warmed up. Your eyes are all red. Have you been crying, or something? And where were you all last night?"

"My uncle was very ill, so I got no sleep," I said.

I was sick to hear her remark, "If only the old fellow would pop off! We'd have fun then, wouldn't we?"

"Very likely," I said heavily.

She asked me, "But did the old bully come across? . . . He must have given you a hundred or two, at least, surely?"

Unfolding the cheque, I said, "He gave me a thousand pounds, and has raised my allowance to a thousand a year. Does that please you?"

It did. "Let's celebrate!" she cried. But I said that I was tired and wanted to rest. I said nothing about the blood transfusion—the thought of what I had done sickened me.

A little later, after she expressed a hope that my uncle might "pop off" soon, we had our first

"But Maggie, you can't go on hoarding yourself for ever."

quarrel. After that we had our first delightful reconciliation, and I agreed to take her for a holiday to the Pyrenees. In this, as you will see, there was the sure hand of God.

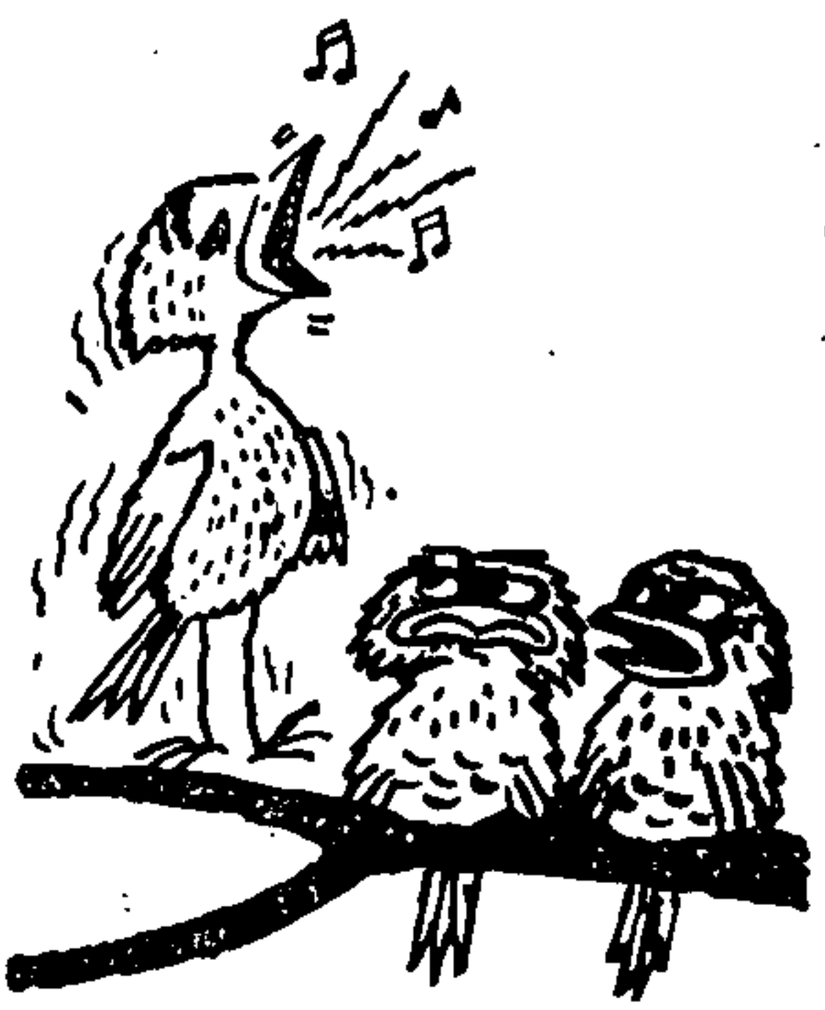
Ah, but that was a holiday! We spent a delightful week in Paris, and then went south. It is a wonderful thing, to leave the station under a fine rain, and wake up under a blinding sun. Mavis had never been abroad before. As you must know, the greatest pleasure that things give their possessor is the delight he finds in sharing them with someone he loves . . . There was a forest, a road almost without perspective; a certain view of blue water, white foam, and yellow sand; above all, the little peak the peasants call La Dent Gâtée.

You may keep your Matterhorn, your Mont Blanc, and your Dent du Midi. Give me my Dent Gâtée. It has hidden depths. Never mind the precipices that go rushing a thousand feet down, buttressed like the walls of the great cathedrals; never mind the icy torrents that spring out of the living rock and go, in blown spray, down into the terraced valley! I like the Dent Gâtée for its silence, and for its mysterious caves.

I tried to convey this to Mavis, but she felt the cold. She wanted to be over the mountain, and into Spain; where, she said, she proposed to hear a flamenco, learn a gipsy dance, and see a bullfight. So we hurried up and up that tricky road until, a mile before we were to touch the mountain village called Lô, we crashed . . .

It was not my fault. It happened like this: Mavis was hungry and thirsty, and I was preoccupied . . . In my head something kept singing: *You murdered your Uncle Arnold—Murdered your Uncle Arnold—He will die in September.* Changing into second gear, coming into low, I encountered a cow, and swerved. My right-hand turn, thoughtlessly twisted on, took me up a steep bank. The car turned over. It stopped rolling at the edge of the road, the rear wheels spinning over the cliff.

Mavis' arm had gone through the windscreen. I was always a coward—I had ducked—I was merely stunned.



"I wish he'd leave that sort of thing to Mr. Stravinsky."

Coming to, I ran for help. It happened that an old man was going to Lô, mounted on a mule. I made a tourniquet of my tie, thrust five hundred francs into the man's hand, mounted Mavis on the mule, and followed her to Lô, where there was a doctor. A rugged old fellow, jack of all medical trades and master of none —but no fool.

He said, "Madame has lost too much blood and, what with that and the shock, I order a transfusion. You are in no condition, monsieur, to have half a litre of blood taken out of your arteries at the moment. I have called in a woman of the village. A healthy animal, I assure you."

Then he introduced the woman, Solomona, to whom I gave a thousand francs. She bared a powerful brown arm and giggled as the needle went home in the artery at the crook of the elbow.

A little colour came into Mavis' cheeks as Solomona's blood ran into her veins. It worked like magic. Her eyes opened, the lids fluttering, and she smiled.

I remember saying, "Now I can die," and after that I must have collapsed.

When I was conscious again, a day and a half later, the doctor told me that I had concussion; for which, he said, the only remedy was ice-packs and rest.

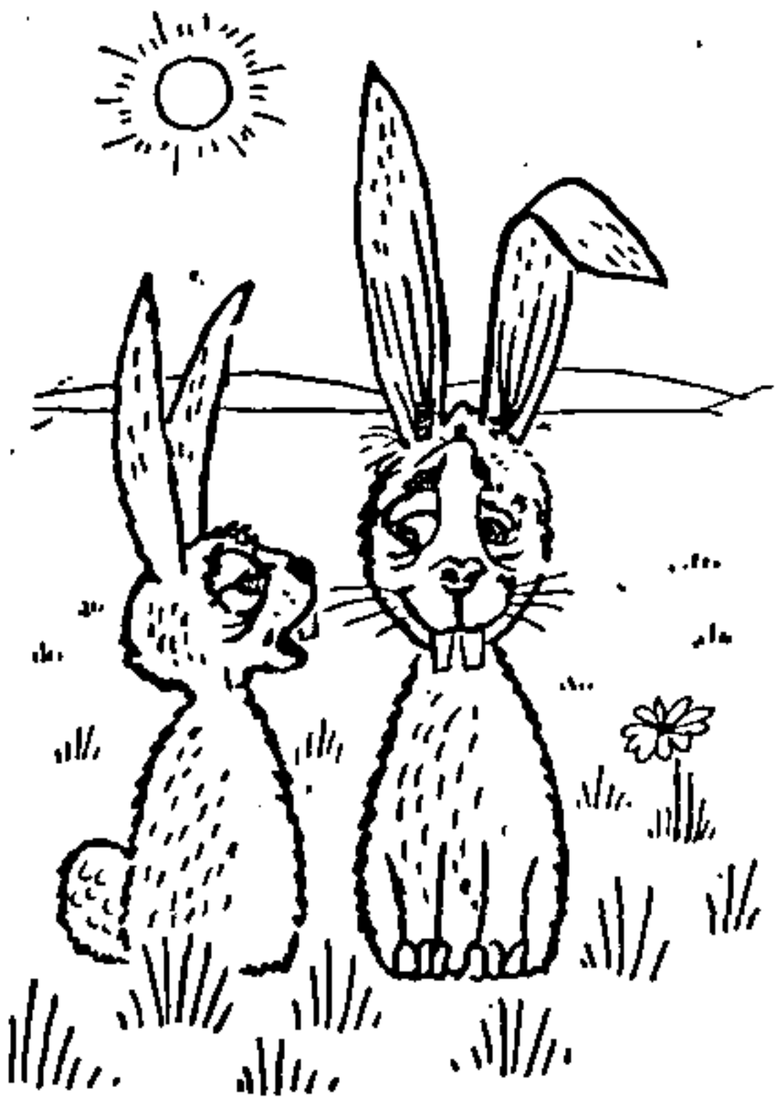
But how could I rest until I had seen Mavis? I went into the room where she lay—and she looked even more beautiful than ever—and, taking her by the hand, begged pardon for my unskilful driving.

"It was all the cow's fault," said Mavis. "She wasn't looking where she was going . . ." Mavis was still a little light-headed. She rambled on, drowsily, "Lucky it wasn't my leg. I couldn't afford that . . . Even so, Abaloni always kept nattering about my not knowing what to do with my arms and hands. Perhaps this will make me worse. Oh, Rod—don't let it!"

"Dearest Mavis, nothing is ever going to make you unhappy."

"That would be nice, Rod . . . I have made sacrifices for my Art, you know?"

"You have made sacrifices, Mavis,



"Ever thought of having your brain drained?"

no doubt. For your Art. So have I made sacrifices, for your Art!"

She laughed, in a lightly-fluttering, high-pitched way, and said, "Oh no! What, you? Sacrifices? Oh no! I sacrificed my body for my Art!" A great cold came over me then.

"You sacrificed your body to whom?"

"To you, of course," she said.

Quite calmly, I believe, I said, "Very likely. But for your Art, and my love of you, Mavis, I have sacrificed my immortal soul."

"Don't let's be intense," said she, wearily, "because I don't think I could bear it."

A strange, unpleasant light made a sickly sunrise in my disordered head. "Why, I believe you were really in love with Abaloni!" I cried.

"Please, Rod, let's not go into that, now!"

And then I knew that it was the choreographer Abaloni whom Mavis had always truly loved. There surged up in me a great white hate—boiling bubble-to-bubble with my love for her. In circumstances such as this, a man feels at the tip of his tongue some stupendous speech . . . and comes out with something trite and silly.

I could only say, "Abaloni's fat!"

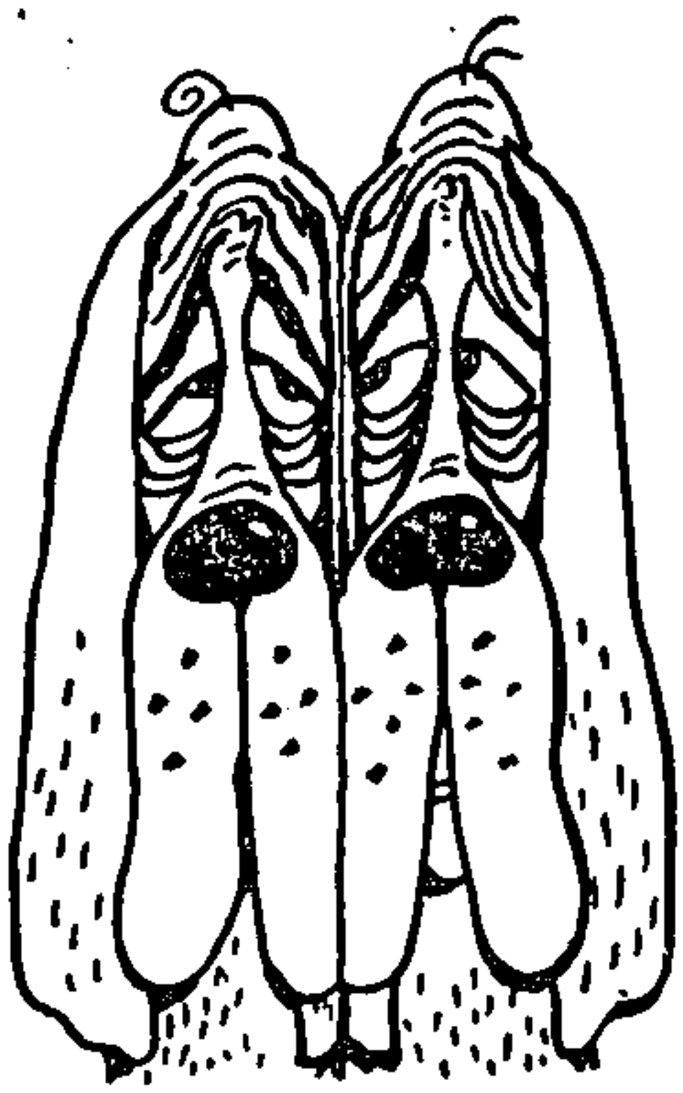
"You're no oil painting," said she.

Before I could find words to say in reply, Mavis sat up. For the moment, I thought that she was crying, because tears were running down her cheeks, and I said, "Dear Mavis, forgive my inadequacies, and pardon me if I hurt you. I love you most dearly. If it will be better for you to be with Abaloni, then go. I thought you loved me. I was a fool to think so. Take half of what I have, and go to Abaloni—"

But she was not crying. She could not catch her breath.

I called for the doctor. He said, "It happens, occasionally. There are people, especially women, who are affected like this in the mountains by changes in atmospheric pressure. Come away, and let her rest."

I came away with the nurse, who put me to bed with cold towels on



"Happy?"

my head. Next morning, when I went to see Mavis, she said, "I must have been sort of woozy yesterday. Rod, did I say all sorts of silly things? . . . I can sit up today. Let's go home soon. But tell me—did I talk all kinds of silliness?"

"Not a word," I said.

"I must have had a temperature," she said. "I don't know what's the matter with me, but I seem to have caught a virus, or something—" Mavis began to struggle for breath, and the sound that she made—how can I describe it—was as if she had been caught at that fine point between breathing-in and breathing-out. She agonised, at last, in a convulsive combination of coughing and sneezing.

"The doctor says this has something to do with atmospheric pressure," I told her. "As soon as he gives permission, I'll take you home. I'm sorry our little holiday turned out so wretchedly."

Mavis said, "Please, Rod, let it be soon! I can't breathe here . . . Do you very much mind not kissing me, Rod? This might be catching. Yes, that's it—it might be catching. Do you mind awfully leaving me alone a bit?"

I had to say, "Look, Mavis—did you mean what you said last night about loving Abaloni?"

She became angry at this, and cried, "Oh, for heaven's sake, *do* try to be *civilised* just for *once* in your life! Please leave me alone, Rod."

So I left her, and went to see the doctor. He handed me a cablegram. It was from my uncle's solicitor, Mr. Coote. My uncle, Sir Arnold Arnold, had died suddenly in Paris: would I, his heir and executor, return to London at my earliest convenience?

When I read this, I put my head between my hands and sat for a while rocking to and fro in deep grief. Then this grief was overlaid with black fear. *Was it I who killed him?* I wondered. But I reassured myself—this could not be: oysters would not be in season until the first of September. So I went back to Mavis' bedside.

"Oh, please, Rod—" she began.

"I must go back to England immediately," I said. "My uncle's dead."

Her face was radiant as she cried, "Oh, how—terrible! Oh, I'm so—sorry!"

I could almost have killed her then. But I stooped to kiss her. I hope I shall not long remember—I am sure that I shall never forget—the quick little gesture of revulsion with which she turned away as soon as my lips touched her cheek.

"Better hurry, Rod, darling," she said, and began to weep.

"You're crying!" I said.

"So are you," said she.

"I loved the old man very much, I think," I said, "and you even more, Mavis. Until soon. Good-bye."

Before I left I sent for the woman who had given of her blood to my wife and, in genuine gratitude, put some money into her hand, and thanked her most warmly.

She burst into tears and rushed out of the room.

When I went to see Mr. Coote in his office in Staple Inn, my worst fears were confirmed. Discreetly congratulating me upon my inheritance—which, even after death duties had been paid, would still leave me rich—Coote told me the story of my uncle's death.

"As you no doubt know, the late Sir Arnold was of—de mortuis nil nisi bonum—an impatient, an impetuous disposition. Oh dear!. In a nutshell: the oyster season being over, he resented having to live on slops—he said he'd be damned if he would, and said in Paris they served oysters all the year round. 'And what the devil's the matter with a fat Portuguese oyster, damn it all?' Sir Arnold said."

"Go on, Mr. Coote!"

"To proceed . . . Sir Arnold went to Paris. He went straight from the train to the restaurant, ordered three dozen of the finest Portuguese oysters and half a bottle of wine. He ate the oysters, drank the wine, and collapsed in a convulsion; a sort of asthmatic convulsion, but of the most violent kind. And this, I regret to say, was too much for his poor heart . . . Now, please, oh, please, you really must pull yourself together! Dunhill! A glass of water, quick!—"

For, at this, I fainted.

I was put to bed and given opiates and sedatives—bromide of this, bromide of that. But always, when the world slipped away, and I slid out of it into the cool dark, I was snatched out of my black, drugged peace by fantastic nightmares.

In these, invariably, my Uncle Arnold appeared, curiously blue in the face and unpleasantly bloated, wheezing, "Give me credit for it, Rod, my boy—never dreamed you had it in you to kill your old uncle! But you ought to have done it with a poker, or even the paper-knife, face-to-face like a man . . . I could have forgiven you for that, Rod. But yours was a woman's trick, a poisoner's trick. I'll give you a taste of your own medicine—I'll give you a dose of your own poison, you woman, you!"

Then my uncle coughed himself into dissolution, and I awoke with a loud cry.

I might have lain there for a week or more; only on the third morning there came a telegram from Mavis, saying that she was arriving at Victoria Station by the boat train from Paris the following day. I got out of bed at once, and made myself presentable, and was pacing the platform a good hour before the train came in. She was more beautiful than ever. "Oh, Mavis, Mavis!" I cried, kissing her.

To my horror and astonishment, her eyes filled with tears, and her chest heaved in a fit of coughing that sounded like thin steel chains being shaken in a cardboard box. "For God's sake, go away!" she said, as soon as she could talk. "You make me ill!"

I am too tired to write more. What Mavis said is true. Literally, I make her ill. I understand, now, the sudden violent emotion of the woman who gave Mavis her blood in that transfusion—Solomona, her name was, I think. I have inquired since, and tests have been made. Solomona is violently allergic to my kind of red hair.

Therefore Mavis, who is all I have to live for, finds that my presence is poisonous to her— So she has left me, and I am dreadfully alone.

It is impossible for her to live with me. But it is impossible for me to live without her.

I see no occasion further to prolong my existence.

With this, I end the narrative of my confession: God is just.

OYSTER FEAST!

We praise the oyster, cloisterous and true,
Whose normal life's unboisterous and blue.
He chooses not to royster,
And his choiceter be an oyster
Gives him poise the while we foist him on a stew—
Him or missus, much the moister of the two.

Oh, he's smelly, full of jelly, coarse of grain;
But a shelly nonpareilly in the main.
As a worm to vermicelli,
As a Celtic to a Kelly,
He's an oyster from his belly to his brain.
And with six a quorum, may we meet again !

DAVID MCCORD

It was a fair fight—the sea versus the man

SEVENTH WAVE

BY DAVID GUNN

THE tempest whistled about the walls of the lonely cottage on Garbheileach and tore at the eaves before screaming on away over the water to the mainland. One square of light, divided symmetrically into four panes, broke the darkness of the seashore—part sheltered by the backbone of the island which rose black behind the cottage.

Inside, old Andrew sat in the big chair directly facing the burning peat, with his wife's smaller chair to the right. Beyond the smaller chair in a dark corner stood the disused weaving loom, and in the opposite corner was the bed in which he now slept alone.

He had sat there each evening with very few exceptions for the last seventy-nine years, though not always in the big chair in front of the fire. There had been many years when his grandfather had sat there—he hardly remembered them now: the old man would talk to him of the great potato blight and famine of 1846, and when he was a bad child frighten him with tales of the Men of the North—the Vikings—who had come many, many years ago to plunder and seize, and who were a powerful race with blond hair and blue eyes, sailing in all weathers, fearing nothing.

Father had followed grandfather and now there was himself. His wife had died a year previously, so in place of their silent evening fireside communion after the day's work was done, he would sit gazing into the burning peat as he lived with his memories and fondled Shep, the ageing sheepdog.

Shep was ill—of what he did not know. All too often illness meant death to man or beast in the isolated Garvellachs or Isles of the Sea, and the old man accepted this fact: but Shep was now his only friend and to lose him would be a fearful blow. Apart from the companionship, the dog helped him get the dory to the water and went with him on the daily fishing trips that

were their main livelihood. He would round up the five sheep when required, bounding with swift grace over the heather, but under the complete control of his master's whistle; and when the old man's wife had been alive, Shep had run messages between them from different parts of the island—of which they were the sole inhabitants.

Tonight the dog lay on his right side in between the big chair and the fire; the eyes were closed, and his muzzle was hot and dry to the touch. Every so often Shep would shake feverishly and then resume the quick uneven panting.

"Poor old fellow," muttered Andrew in the Gaelic, his only language. "I wish I knew the medicine to help you."

If only there was no storm. If only there was not a mile of pounding sea in between him and Naoimh where, not a doctor or vet but the acknowledged curer of the Garvellachs, Angus, kept his drugs . . . so Andrew thought as he settled down to keep watch beside his old friend silently suffering. The hands that comforted the dog bore deep creased scars from handling heavy fish on the cords. The firelight reflected from a lean face where fiords in the flesh had been driven by years of Hebridean weather.

Should he venture out to try to make Naoimh that night? That would be the foolishness of a very young man: but would life without Shep be any better fate? He walked to the window and studied the scene outside. The sea was white with foam a few yards from the sheltered weather shore upon which the dory lay; low cumulus could just be made out scudding quickly over, jettisoning large drops of rain earthwards.

"Well Shep, shall we try?" he asked, taking the dog's head in his hands. "I'm thinking it isn't very sensible but there is little to lose."

He laid the dog's head gently down, and reached for his boots. Shep, sensing that something was going on, opened an eye and took in the sight of the old man attiring himself for rough weather. The dog gave an expectant whine. Andrew prepared a storm lantern, shouldered a coil of rope, and donned a faded yellow sou'wester. Taking the tweed rug from the low bed, he wrapped Shep gently in it, leaving the dog a nosehole through which to breathe. Shep was not heavy and lay limp, an easy burden under the old man's strong right arm.

Before unlatching the door, it was a habit of years for Andrew to turn to look at the faded photograph of his wife on the mantelpiece, but recently he had taken it down because it made him too lonely to see it, and it was put carefully away in the cupboard by

the window under his clean shirt. Tonight wind tore the rattling door from his fingers before he could regrasp it and muscle it shut against the pressure. He turned and, with lantern swinging like a mad pendulum, set off through the night over the shingle to the dory as the first specks of dampness touched his face. Spray would cover the island tonight, leaving its grey deposit everywhere and tingeing even the peat-brown water of the burn with a salty tang.

The dory lay a few yards from the breakers, the pitch that preserved it making it even blacker than the night. The dog would normally assist by pulling on the bow rope, and Shep, remembering this, struggled within the rug in order to assist his master. Andrew soothed him, and laid the suffering animal on the stern bench. The lantern was hung from a small post in the bows. By placing both hands on the stern, and with his back almost horizontal the old man moved the boat slowly to the water. A final lunge and a leap and they were afloat, bobbing around at the mercy of the breakers. He deftly paddled clear of the beach: this was his element—he understood, loved, hated, and respected the sea.

There would be one hundred yards of sheltered water if he stayed close to the beach before crossing the first exposed stretch. Now with both arms he bent his back and the oars against the thole pins.

"Look Shep, we have company on our voyage," he shouted above the wind, as a small feathery shape fluttered past the swinging lantern. He sensed rather than saw it; the little storm petrels only ventured near land during the lustiest storms when even the trawlermen ran for shelter.

A quarter of a mile of pounding sea exposed to the wrath of an angry Atlantic lay before them, then shelter in the lee of Chuli, the intervening island; then another half mile to Naoimh. The gentle rock of the boat was now becoming a corkscrew motion as they reached the point of Garbheileach. Wavelets became waves, waves became a steep swell; the wind, unleashed upon her prey, tore the sou'wester from his ears without mercy. Only the stabilising influence of the oars kept the boat from overturning. Climbing up the crest of one wave the dory would seem to be skybound; then would come the hanging crest and the sensation of a dropping lift as the boat plunged into the depths of a trough. Despite these gyrations the oars were making themselves felt, and the boat made headway.

His sou'wester gone, salt water ran down behind his ears over his nose and into his mouth, leaving a salty taste on his lips. If

he looked into the wind, spray blew into his eyes; if he looked away, it eddied around his head into them. Andrew prayed: "Lord God, protect me from the violence of this storm, and take me safe to Naoimh to save my sick friend."

Shep crouched lower, partially protected by the sodden rug. The dog's eyes constantly sought those of his master—somehow knowing that his master was fighting for his life, and the knowledge served to strengthen the close bond between hem.

Every so often a wave bigger than the rest would threaten to swamp them. These waves usually came at intervals, with six smaller ones in between. The old man had often counted them to pass the time as he sat with the sheep during lambing; one—two—three . . . then the suspense. Would the seventh wave again roll up the beach farther than the rest?

The little boat rode them, but crest after white crest would hang over it menacingly . . . It was only a short time before a crest swamped the boat, drenching the already sodden old man, but worse, lifting Shep half over the side of the dory. The dog was helpless, wrapped tightly in the rug, but made no sound as Andrew lunged over from the oars to the rescue.

"You don't like being wrapped, but I have to keep you warm so bide with me," he comforted.

The dog safely inboard, he returned to his work. But, lashed to the thole pins, one of the oars had bent under the boat with the impact of a wave; the lashing had parted, leaving him only one oar with which to propel them. Horror-struck at this predicament, the old man could only paddle with the remaining oar, which he did with all his strength. He realised that the tide which accompanied the swell through the gap would sweep them downwind of the islands and out of their comparative shelter. Suddenly he caught a glimpse of the lost oar—its glistening blade reflecting the light of the lantern.

It took him several minutes and a great deal of energy to reach it, but soon he was once more pulling on both oars for the shelter of Chuli.

Before long they were in the lee of the island—a lee which gave protection from waves that had no chance to encroach within the hundred yards they were from the shore, but not from the wind which howled unhindered across the low island. A lee of craggy rocks upon which it was impossible to land; but the old man had no wish to land; the struggle had roused within him a single-minded determination to reach his destination, and nothing else would do.

Around the boat skimmed a pair of fulmars. They were

always happiest when a gale blew, for then, with their knowledge of wind currents, they had but to spread their wings to be lifted into the air, where their complete control in wind speeds of seventy or eighty knots afforded Andrew considerable delight in happier moments. He always regarded them as friends, and on this night they resembled angels of destiny sent to watch over him as they banked and soared above the little boat.

"I have a friend with me," he shouted in his guttural Gaelic to the fulmars. "My friend is ill and I am taking him to Angus to be made well." But his words were torn away by the wind, so that nothing could be heard.

Now they were once more reaching open water. This time it was no dash across a gap but half a mile of thundering sea. Rain had ceased, but the wind blew just as strong: the corkscrew motion began again and Andrew gritted his old teeth, pushed the wet hair away from his eyes, and plunged out of the lee.

The shrieking wind whipped white foam from the crests of the waves, hurling it as spindrift for many yards and then down into a trough where it lay in long grey streamers, hissing as it touched, and discolouring the dark water. Often it fell over him and into the dory where it added to the rapidly increasing depth of water in the bilge.

The waves now came from a different direction causing the boat to roll heavily without pitching. The old man had to shift his weight with every roll of the boat to stay on the thwart, which meant a greater effort. A strange feeling began to well inside him and a fit of coughing such as he had never believed possible overcame him for a few seconds. He had never had such a fit of coughing in his life before—there was blood from his aching lungs.

The sea was merciless versus the man who had fought it all his life . . . *On—pull—pull—* He had got into a rhythm of the kind that it is more difficult to break than continue . . . And now a look over his wet oilskin-clad shoulder showed the faint dark outline of his goal. The island was in sight but so was the end of the old man's strength. The elation he felt was more mental than physical, yet the sight of Naoimh gave him renewed vigour for the task, and he looked at Shep and cried, "We're there, old friend. It won't be long now!" Though his mouth framed the words, sound refused to leave his lips.

A gigantic roller drove a few bucketfuls into the boat, and Andrew, looking down, realised that as well as a dory he was pulling about a quarter of a ton of water with them. It came over his ankles; when the small craft rolled heavily it would slop up

to the roundness of his calves. Shep was very much on the alert. The wind had brought a brightness back into the dog's eyes; he watched the old man but even he knew that the situation was critical. The old man watched Shep, too, but his eyes were behaving like the Fladda lighthouse away to the north-east; sometimes there would be light and vision and sometimes complete darkness. He saw only fitfully now.

The dog pricked his ears—there were breakers in the wind. He could hear the thunder of surf on the rocks of Naoimh; the rocks on which they must land, for the old man's ailing strength would permit no easy pull round to the landing-place. He heard the sound a few minutes after the dog, wincing as he now was with every stroke. For him the final test was yet to come—for, as all men of the sea know, the tallest waves are those that cross a shelving bottom, where the mass of moving water finds itself transcending shallows and hurls itself into the air with all the fury that nature can muster.

They entered the race of turbulent tall waves moving forward very slowly, but upward, sideways, and downward with a crazy motion. The old man's eyes were closed, and a whiteness covered his wet cheeks as his body still made the motions of rowing: the boat was sluggish under its living and liquid burden. Rocks were about them now.

Shep was excited; his master was nearly there, but never having seen him in this state of exhaustion before he did not know that this was the end of the old man's strength. There were thirty rock-bestrewn yards left; thirty yards of spray-filled wind through which no eyes could see, let alone the tired eyes of the man and dog. There was no beach here, but a long ledge four feet clear of the water against which the ocean threw itself time and again: towards this the old crofter strained.

Pull—pull—shower of spray—roll back: an oar struck a rock, a wave caught the boat broadside on, and it was over.

The old man choked under the waves but, as his feet found bottom, his clenching hands grasped the bundle of fur and rug that was Shep and he stood up in water to his shoulders. With their last remaining sinew his tired arms hurled Shep on to the ledge where the dog lay panting from fever and excitement as the seventh wave, a mountain of water, came thundering over the rocks. Old Andrew vanished from sight as the water engulfed Shep, throwing the dog, limbs sprawling at random, clear of the rug and a few feet along the ledge. Only a rock boulder prevented the undertow from sweeping Shep off and into the sea once more.

When the waters subsided, the dog lifted its sodden head and seeing no living thing whimpered quietly in its fever and prepared to die . . .

Was it some crescendo of the angry wind? Was it the wing-beat of a fulmar who had come to survey the scene and who now flew down to cock a curious eye at the dog? Or was it the reward of some unseen deity that caused Shep to raise a weary eyelid away from the water's edge? There was a human form lying a few feet from him, forming a dam to the rivulets of undertow.

To his sheer delight, Shep recognised his master—thrown beyond him by the enormous strength of the water—and, giving a weak bark of pleasure, he crawled to the old man to lick his face continually in an effort to revive him. At first there was no sign of life, but eventually the warmth of a wet tongue on his cheek brought a flicker of an eyelid, and he opened tired eyes.

"We made it, boy," whispered old Andrew.

And after ten minutes of rest whilst the waters surged and boiled a few yards from them, the old man got shakily to his feet and he and the dog supported each other the quarter of a mile to the cottage of Angus.

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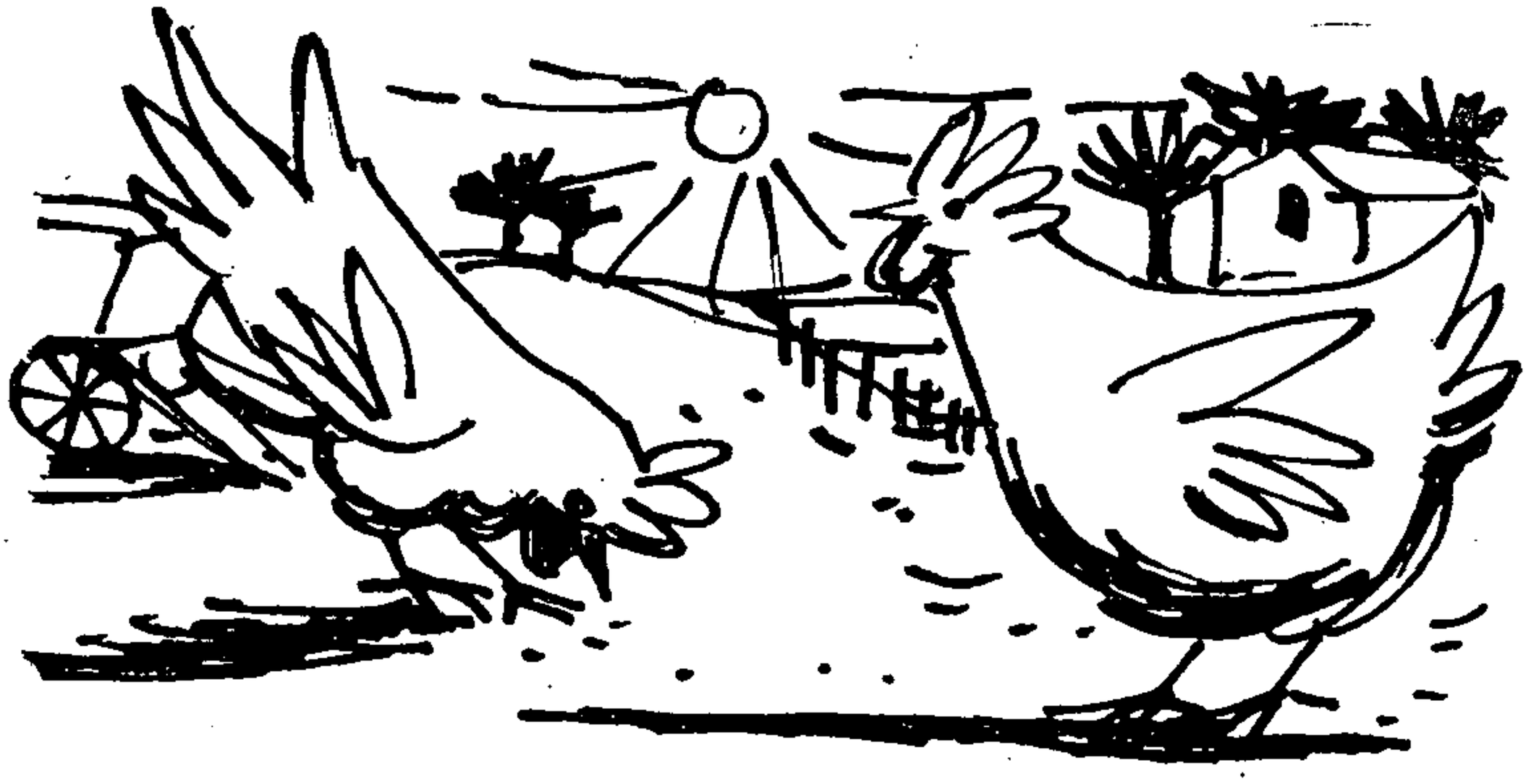

drowsing in the sun

Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun

Ecclesiastes

Drowsy hens murmur of heat, and drool, and dream
In the dusty sun.
But a cock's cry is the sharpened scimitar
That gathers in the dawn.

MARGARET STANLEY-WRENCH, *The Birds*

The puppy sprawled in front of him. He cocked his ears and watched it curiously. Then their noses touched, and he felt the warm little tongue of the puppy on his jowl. White Fang's tongue went out, he knew not why, and he licked the puppy's face.

Hand-clapping and pleased cries from the gods greeted the performance. He was surprised, and looked at them in a puzzled way. Then his weakness asserted itself, and he lay down, his ears cocked, his head on one side, as he watched the puppy. The other puppies came sprawling toward him, to Collie's great disgust; and he gravely permitted them to clamber and tumble over him. At first, amid the applause of the gods, he betrayed a trifle of his old self-consciousness and awkwardness. This passed away as the puppies' antics and mauling continued, and he lay with half-shut patient eyes, drowsing in the sun.

JACK LONDON, *White Fang*

Plan of Campaign

He will just do nothing at all,
He will just sit there in the sun.
And when they speak to him, he will not answer them,
Because he does not care to.
He will stick them with spears and put them in the dustbin.
When they tell him to eat his dinner, he will just laugh at them,
And he will not take his nap, because he does not care to.
He will just sit there in the sun.
He will go away and play with the Panda.
And when they come to look for him
He will put spikes in their eyes and put them in the dustbin,
And put the cover on.
He will not go out in the fresh air or eat his vegetables
Or make wee-wee for them, and he will get as thin as a marble,
He will not do nothing at all.
He will just sit there in the sun.

Declaration of Independence by four-year-old son
(as sung in pram)

Double Summertime

Summer was also the time of these: of sudden plenty, of slow hours and actions, of diamond haze and dust on the eyes, of the valley in post-vernal slumber . . . of jazzing wasps and dragonflies, haystooks and thistle-seeds, snows of white butterflies, skylarks' eggs, bee-orchids and frantic ants; of wolf-cub parades, and boy-scouts' bugles; of sweat running down the legs; of boiling potatoes on bramble fires, of flames glass-blue in the sun; of lying naked in the hill-cold stream; begging pennies for bottles of pop; of girls' bare arms and unripe cherries, green apples and liquid walnuts; of fights and falls and new-scabbed knees, sobbing pursuits and flights; of picnics high up in the crumbling quarries, of butter running like oil, of sunstroke, fever, and cucumber peel stuck cool to one's burning brow.

All this, and the feeling that it would never end, that such days had come for ever, with the pump drying up and the water-butt crawling, and the chalk ground hard as the moon. All sights twice-brilliant and smells twice-sharp, all game-days twice as long. Double charged as we were, like the meadow ants, with the frenzy of the sun, we used up the light to its last violet drop, and even then couldn't go to bed.

LAURIE LEE,
Cider With Rosie

Last Resort

Heat, ma'am! It was so dreadful here, that I found there was nothing left for it but to take off my flesh and sit in my bones.

LADY HOLLAND, *A Memoir of the Rev. Sydney Smith*

Clouded Yellow

Down the air
He falls sun-lazy
Debonair
Upon a daisy;

Now he drifts
To fall between
Snowy rifts
Of scented bean;

And where petals
Lift in flight,
There he settles
Hid from sight.

S. THOMAS ANSELL

The Loveliest Beach . . .

During the afternoon, the Count's placid little mare will take me through the vineyards and woods to what is perhaps the loveliest beach in the world. Lion-gold sand, of the consistency of tapioca, lies smoothly against the white limestone cliff, thrown up in roundels by the force of the sea, which breaks upon a narrow sand-bank some sixty yards clear of the shore. The rocks here are pitted and perforated into natural cisterns, sluggish with weed, and which the receding tide has left full of sea-water and winking fishes; water which the sun has heated to greater than the temperature of human blood. Lowering myself into these natural baths, holding softly to the ladder of many-coloured seaweed, I feel the play of the Ionian, rising and falling about an inch upon the back of my neck. It is like the heart-beat of the world itself . . .

One is entangled and suffocated by this sense of physical merging into the elements around one. Blinded by this black sunlight, nothing remains of the known world, save the small sharp toothless kisses of fish on the hanging body—now no longer owned; a providential link with feeling, like the love of women, or the demands of the stomach, which tie one to the world of simple operations. One could die like this and wonder if it was death.

LAWRENCE DURRELL, *Prospero's Cell*

Thrilled, he saw the light shine through it

LOVE OF MING

BY FRANCIS KING

SERGIO TEMPELLI and his daughter Laura arrived at the house almost at the same moment as the three-wheeler rocked to a standstill outside the porch, and two youths jumped out and began to heave down the " tansu " or Japanese chest which was the latest of Donald Fielder's purchases. In his terror that the chest would be damaged, Donald abandoned his guests, with whom he had only just shaken hands, ignored his wife Mary's demand, " Now what on earth is this? " and rushed down the steps to exhort the youths, in a mixture of Japanese and English, to take care, to lift the cumbersome piece by its handles, not to scratch it . . .

" Isn't it a beauty? " he asked, when it straddled their tiny hall so that it became almost impossible to enter dining-room or sitting-room. " Gorgeous! And such a bargain."

"And where are you going to put it? " Mary asked.

" Oh, I don't know," he said. " Plenty of places. I must think about it."

" Yes. You'd better." She remembered their guests. " Please, Signor Tempelli—if you can squeeze past . . . Mind your pretty frock, dear . . . That's right . . . Come along, Donald."

Donald was kneeling beside the chest, rubbing a hand over the drawers.

" Donald, dear. Donald!" At that last sharp exclamation Donald gave the chest an affectionate pat and followed them into the sitting-room.

" Well, well!" Tempelli boomed out. A large, fleshy Neapolitan, with coarse white hair tumbling over a heavily lined forehead and hanging down a neck no less heavily lined, he spoke English with a trace of a cockney accent. " You have a regular museum here, haven't you?" Hands on abundant hips, he surveyed the small room into which had been crammed most of Donald's acquisitions of the last three years—chipped lacquer boxes,

Buddhist candlesticks, temple bells, watches, bits of pottery, faded and tattered strips of silk, rusty figurines and, hanging everywhere, often one on top of another, innumerable kakemono.

" You can imagine what fun the maid and I have keeping all this—" she prevented herself saying junk—" Now sit down, please, Signor Tempelli. Donald, will you see to the drinks? "

Donald rubbed his hands together self-consciously, at that moment not at all disposed to see to the drinks. " It's odd," he confessed, " I never had the urge to collect anything until I came to Japan three years ago. Now the bug has well and truly bitten me. But I know virtually nothing about it. Still—" he gave Tempelli a nervous smile— " one learns by one's mistakes. Doesn't one ?"

"And there have been enough of those," his wife chimed in with a deadly joviality. A plump, handsome woman she raised a handkerchief to dab at the beads of sweat which glistened on either side of her small upturned nose.

" Now, do please tell me about this." Donald lifted a plate off its stand. " It's wonderful to have an expert in the house. Do you think that it's a genuine piece of Sung celadon? It ought to be—I bought it off an old professor at the university here . . ." Mary had gone to mix the drinks herself, with a sigh of exasperation.

Tempelli turned the plate over and over in his hands, held it to the light, flicked at it with a finger and eventually pronounced, " A beauty! A real beauty! "

His daughter Laura peered over his shoulder. She was a girl of seventeen, anaemic-looking but pretty. Her large, dull eyes, set flat in a face which was itself all angles, suddenly brightened. " Is it Sung? " she asked.

Her father boomed, " Of course it is! You've a real treasure here, Mr. Fielder." Donald clutched the plate, blushing.

" We so enjoyed your book on Japan revisited," Mary said, as soon as they were settled with their drinks. " Didn't we, Donald?"

" Hm," Donald said. "Oh, yes." He had already detected in Tempelli's book innumerable small errors of fact which, since he was a natural pedant, had inevitably shocked him. " Your last visit here must certainly have been colourful."

" Yes," Tempelli agreed, in smiling self-congratulation. " I am one of those people to whom things invariably happen. Sometimes that's good, sometimes bad. Still, we have an amusing life, don't we, Laura? "

Laura continued to sip at her orangeade, having given her father a small smile, almost a smirk.

Tempelli leaned back in his chair, scratching at the hairy shin which rested across the knee of his other leg. He was wearing shorts, a loose short-sleeved shirt and sandals—not, Mary thought dress appropriate even in this heat for a call on strangers in the evening. He enjoyed talking about his work. The book, he now explained in his deep, reverberant voice, had been a success in Italy but far more of one in England and America. "Perhaps I was lucky in my translator," he guffawed. It was, he knew, what malicious friends had already been suggesting. That kind of book, he went on, was an investment. One wrote a novel, it sold five thousand or ten thousand or fifteen thousand copies and then—finish. But a book like this never ceased to sell, year in, year out.

Donald's attention wandered, and he noticed that the girl's was wandering too. Only Mary, excellent hostess, kept her bright brown eyes fixed on Tempelli's face, nodding every now and then, smiling or making some encouraging interjection. Eventually Laura got up, and began to wander round the room, stooping from time to time to examine one or other of the objects so carefully set out.

When people inspected his collection, Donald was invariably torn between emotions of pride on the one hand and annoyance on the other. "Oh, please don't pick that up," he would want to cry out; and when the netsuke or cloisonné box had been replaced, he would at once hurry over to edge it a few centimetres to left or right. Laura, to his astonishment, returned everything to its exact position.

Now she had drifted out to the hall, where he could see her crouched on the floor beside his tansu, her long, straight hair, worn in a bob, falling over to screen her face as she pulled out drawer after drawer. When, at long last, she returned to the sitting-room, she caught him glancing at her and responded with her small nervous smile.

". . . Oh, how fascinating!" Mary was saying. "Isn't that fascinating, Donald? And so you think that you may be here for some months. That *will* be nice." She looked over her shoulder for Laura. She had begun to wish that the girl would stop fidgeting and return to her chair.

Tempelli now broached the real subject of his visit. Could either of the Fielders, since they knew Kyoto so well, recommend a furnished house? He and Laura were at their wits' end.

Donald thought for a while and then nervously suggested a house near their own; but Mary at once declared this to be impossible—it was infested with mukade, Japanese centipedes,

of a repulsive-size which could bite one dangerously. The drains were bad and both children of the last tenants had suffered from septic throats.

Donald, pooh-poohing all this, began to write the address on a scrap of paper. It was only when he offered to draw a map for them to show to their driver, that Mary realised what he was doing.

"No, Donald," she then said, pleasant but emphatic. "Don't be silly. That house is quite out of the question. You know it is."

"What kind of bath does it have?" Tempelli suddenly asked.

"Bath? Oh, western, of course," Donald answered him.

"Western! Che peccato! Then no, I'm afraid no. We wish to live entirely in the Japanese style. We must have a Japanese-style bath. That is essential."

"I told you—it's out of the question," Mary again put in her word.

Laura here interjected, in Italian, that they could always go to the public bath, but her father retorted, "Ma no, Laura, no," and she at once lapsed into silence.

"An absurd suggestion, Donald," said Mary.

Donald placed the scrap of paper on the low table before them, and they began to discuss other possibilities.

It was then that Laura behaved so oddly.

While they talked, she picked up the paper, stared down at it in what Donald assumed to be regret at her father's refusal even to consider a house so promising, and then, cupping the paper in both her hands, began to shake it as though it were a dice. That done, she rolled it into a pellet which she rotated between finger and thumb of her right hand while with her left hand she gently stroked the hair which fell over her left cheek. Donald watched her, with an odd sensation of excitement, as an ornithologist might watch a rare bird, but he was careful that she should not realise that he was doing so, crouched as she was on a low stool a short distance behind the rest of them. Suddenly she raised her right hand to her mouth, made a pretence of coughing, and popped the pellet in. She swallowed, it was gone.

Could she be hungry? he thought idiotically for a moment. There were nuts and saltines on the occasional table beside her and Mary had been generous with the titbits she had handed round. Why should she wish to devour a grubby piece of paper, torn from the lining of a Japanese cigarette packet?

When the Italians eventually got up to leave, Tempelli bowing over Mary's hand and murmuring extravagant compliments,

Laura turned to Donald and asked, "Where do you buy your curios?"

"In the junk-shops here and there," he replied vaguely, as he always replied when asked this question, jealously guarding his sources from any possible competitor.

"I like junk-shops," Laura said. "Will you take me with you one day?" To anyone else making this request he would have been quick with his excuses. But he now surprised himself by assenting grudgingly, "Well, yes if you like."

"I should like that very much," she said. "Perhaps we could fix a day now?"

"Let me telephone to you." He did not wish to be rushed. "I have your hotel number."

"Quite a character," Mary said, when she had shut the front door. She meant Tempelli, not his daughter.

"Yes, quite a character," Donald agreed, meaning Laura.

"And now where on earth do you propose to put this monstrosity of yours?"

Donald deliberated more than once whether to telephone to Laura or not; that he should even consider doing so was unusual. Once he even went so far as to call at the hotel, but both she and her father were out, and when asked if he wished to leave a message, he replied that no, he would come again another time. Eventually Laura sent him a postcard: *I still expect your call. Do you remember your promise to me? Please be kind and take me with you on your next shopping expedition. I await you. Laura Tempelli.* Donald tore up this postcard as soon as he had replied to it, without showing it to Mary

He enjoyed their subsequent outing. In Kyoto the junk-shops remain open until nine, ten, or even eleven o'clock at night, and it was after dinner that he called for Laura at the Japanese inn into which she and her father had now moved. "I think that I'll potter around the shops," was all he had said to Mary as he prepared to go out; and he had added, knowing that it was safe to do so, "Care to come?"

She had not even bothered to answer that invitation, but had warned him in phrases he had heard her use repeatedly before, "Now please, dear, don't waste money. Remember we're overdrawn."

Donald and Laura got on well. He was flattered both by her eagerness to seek his instruction and by her delight at each discovery he made. He had a habit of crouching down to dig away at a pile of apparent rubbish with both of his hands, rather

like a puppy, and she would stand agog above him to see what he unearthed. Donald liked it less when, at their third place of call, she too started to excavate; and her eye, he soon realised, was quite as good as his. His pleasure in her company was now tinged with the jealousy which he invariably felt when he encountered a nature as acquisitive as his own. But if equally acquisitive, Laura was more generous, as he learnt to his shame.

She had pounced—with an alacrity which had made him temporarily furious—on two dust-covered gilt figures which she had noticed—heaven knows how, since they had escaped his own searching eye—at the back of the bottom shelf of a cabinet crammed with ancient, moth-eaten dolls, their arms, legs and even noses and ears often gruesomely amputated. "Oh, look!" she cried. "Two cats." Hugging the figures to her, she began to dust them off on the end of her silk scarf.

"No, not cats," he corrected tetchily. "Foxes. Guardians of the Inari Shrine. H'm. They're really quite nice—quite nice. Yes." He took one from her and fondled it in his hands. "Not bad at all. Are you—" a momentary tremor shook his voice—"are you . . . do you want them?"

"Oh, yes, I think so! I am so fond of cats and so is papa. Of course they're not really cats," she added hastily, "I know that, but I shall pretend that they are. Could you please ask him how much they cost?"

Donald turned reluctantly to the dealer who, even in the warmth of this May evening, squatted at the back of his shop with a rug over his knees and a shawl draping his bony shoulders, while he played "go" with a child of seven or eight. He hoped that the price would be high enough to put Laura off. Then he could return later to bargain with the dealer, an old friend, to procure the foxes for himself. But unfortunately, perhaps because he was absorbed in his game, the dealer quoted a price so ridiculously low that if Donald had not been trained in dissimulation on such occasions, he would have shown his astonishment.

"Six hundred yen," he told Laura, trying to make it sound too much.

"Six hundred yen." Not yet used to Japanese money, she had to make a calculation. "But that is nothing—nothing at all." She scrabbled in her purse. "Here, let me pay him before he changes his mind. Quick." She was giggling with delight at her bargain.

"Are you sure you really want them?"

"Of course I want them! What is six hundred yen anyway?

Here. Please." She thrust the notes at him. Donald grudgingly paid.

" You must admit they're charming," she said.

He nodded. " Beautiful craftmanship. And the stands are so pretty. The Japanese call that wood hinoki, you know. It's my favourite wood."

" Now—" she separated the foxes, one in each hand—" this is for me and this is for you . . . Please." Donald had drawn back in guilty amazement. " Let us share them as a memento of this occasion together. You have been so kind to me, I have enjoyed myself so much." She fondled the fox which she had kept for herself. Then she raised her eyes to his, " Let us go out together, soon. Soon. Yes? "

" Of course," Donald said . . .

When he got home and began to wander around the sitting-room, trying to decide where to place the fox, Mary looked up from her reading to ask, " And what's it this time? " Donald held out the figure.

" A cat," she said.

" No, not a cat. A fox."

" Well, a fox then. And how much did you give for that? "

" Nothing, nothing at all. A real bargain."

" Oh, Donald! You've been wasting money again."

On the twenty-fifth of every month there was a huge market in the grounds of one of the shrines. In one corner of it the dealers in scrap-iron, old clothes, used furniture, and bric-a-brac of every kind set up their stalls. They arranged their wares on tatami-grass mats on which they also squatted and over their heads other tatami-grass mats, supported on poles, kept off the summer sunshine . . .

" Do please tell your father to hurry if he wishes to come with us," he urged Laura in the lobby of the inn. " It's hopeless to go at all if one goes too late."

Laura shouted in Italian through the closed sliding-door which led to Tempelli's bedroom and he boomed back in English, " All right! I'm coming! Just one moment, please! "

" He is finishing something. A review."

" Couldn't he do that later? At this rate everyone will get there before us. The whole point is to be there when it opens." Donald had begun to wish that he had never agreed to take them, even though, at a first sight of Laura, so elegant in her simple blue crepê-de-chine skirt and white blouse, he had felt his heart quicken exactly as it quickened when he spotted a bargain.

" Perhaps your father could follow us . . ."

But at that moment Tempelli appeared, in white shorts, white shirt left open to reveal a rubbery chest covered in coarse grey hair, and white sandals. On his head he wore what appeared to be a child's floppy sun-hat. " Ecco mi! " he said, putting a comradely arm round Donald's shoulder. " Forgive me for keeping you waiting . . . Damn! I've forgotten my sun-glasses. Just one moment, please."

To Donald it was an agony which made him begin to hate the plump, handsome Italian. He wanted to shout at him, " If you can't come now, then don't come at all! "

" Papa, you must hurry, hurry! " Laura cried, catching the infection of Donald's urgency " Hurry! "

" Plenty of time," Tempelli sang out as he vanished . . .

" Yes, it's as I feared," Donald said bitterly, when they had explored half the area given over to bric-a-brac and had found nothing except a model horse in a glass case, one hoof missing, which Donald had bought merely out of exasperation.

" It's rather fun," Laura said of this horse, guessing that he needed to be encouraged.

"But three hundred yen is far too much."

Tempelli had begun to clown before a pretty girl who was selling used kimonos. He put on a flowered one, worn only by women, placed a hand on one of his abundant hips, and minced up and down before her. " Kirei, ne? " he asked, exaggerating the foreignness, of his accent. The girl giggled behind a small, raised hand, her head turned sideways, and down. What an ass! thought Donald. It was astonishing that he should be a successful writer, a brilliant linguist and—so everyone said—an authority on oriental art.

The three of them strolled on until they eventually came to the stall of a legless old man, one eye sealed by cataract, who usually squatted before an array of goods so pitiful that, even in a market such as this, few prospective customers ever stopped before him. Donald however always stopped, telling himself on each occasion that one day, perhaps today, he would come upon some treasure.

There were the usual rusty nails and bolts, the usual chipped tumblers, the usual tattered scraps of silk from obi which had rotted away from use, the usual tawdry combs with half their teeth missing. But, yes, there was also a tea-bowl: rather an interesting tea-bowl; in fact a very interesting tea-bowl. Slowly, forcing himself to appear impassive and casual, Donald reached

out over the rubbish to pluck it from the wooden box in which it lay with some scratched lacquer plates and a monstrous lamp, all sharp angles and dusty mauve and green tassels and bobbles. He turned the bowl over and was amazed to discover the Ming mark.

"Tempelli!" he called. It was becoming harder and harder to conceal his excitement. "What do you make of this?"

The bowl was of blue and white porcelain, and Donald noticed with a thrill of pleasure how the sunlight shone through it.

Tempelli repeated the whole elaborate ritual of holding the cup up to the light, flicking at it with a forefinger, caressing it with the ball of his thumb, viewing it from far and near, which he had already gone through when asked to appraise the Sung piece. Donald and Laura watched him in agony. "Amazing," he eventually pronounced. "I really do think that it is genuine Ming."

"Oh, do you? Do you honestly?"

"Of course, I can't be a hundred per cent sure, but as far as I can be sure . . . It's a beautiful piece."

Donald turned back to the old vendor and negligently asked the price, first of the hideous lamp, and then, as though as an after-thought, of the bowl. The dealer said fifty yen and Donald knew that if he cared to bargain at that moment, he could make that fifty, thirty. Promptly he handed over the money—the equivalent of a shilling—and the dealer then wrapped up the piece in a screw of newspaper as yellow as himself.

"Oh, let me see it, let me see it!" Laura cried.

Donald grudgingly shifted the newspaper so that part of the rim of the bowl was revealed.

"No, all of it, all of it. Please! I won't break it, I'll wrap it up again." She gasped with pleasure when the bowl lay in her hands. "Oh, it's magnificent, magnificent." She ran a forefinger around its base. "So beautiful. I've always wanted a Ming piece always. Please!"

Suddenly she turned to Donald. "Sell it to me. Will you? You have other Ming pieces. I'll give you anything you ask for it. Please! I'm crazy for it."

She now tried to make a joke of her persistence, guessing rightly that it was embarrassing the Englishman.

He began to feel the drag of her will, like some dangerous current plucking him away from the safe and familiar shore on which he and Mary had erected their life together. The sweat broke out on his forehead and above his thin upper lip. She was

still holding the bowl; he felt that he must get it away from her before it was too late.

"Please!" She continued to cajole. "I love this pattern. Won't you? Be nice. Be generous. Any price you care to name—anything, anything."

"No," he said. "I'm sorry. I want it for myself." He felt now as though they were locked in some trial of physical strength. "Please give it to me."

"I refuse!" she cried out laughing. "I won't! I'll keep it for myself!"

"Please!" Gently but firmly he prised the bowl from her grasp, using both his hands; and with that action he had the sensation of all resistance mysteriously ebbing away from beneath him. Momentarily they stared at each other, aghast and ashamed; then both hurried to behave as if the incident had never happened.

"Oh, look at that lovely piece of damask!" Laura exclaimed. The damask, as they both knew, was not lovely, but Donald stooped to examine it and agreed, "Yes, it's a gorgeous shade, isn't it?"

Only when the time came for them to say good-bye did Laura again mention the bowl.

Putting out a hand to touch it through its wrapping, she said, "I envy you that. It's beautiful, really beautiful. I do wish that you had agreed to sell it to me."

Her voice, sincerely regretful up to this moment, took on an unpleasantly wheedling tone as she smiled up at him, her head on one side, "Won't you change your mind? Won't you?"

"No," Donald retorted brusquely. "I've told you. I want it for myself. I'm sorry."

"How mean of you!" She flounced away from him, stamping one foot in a petulance which was half in earnest and half in joke . . .

Donald never felt close to Laura after that. When he arrived home, he even told Mary of the incident, so much had it outraged him. "She went on and on and on at me. Really, it was most embarrassing."

"And what did her father say? Didn't he try to restrain her?"

"No. He thought it a huge joke. Just laughed and laughed, as though we were two children squabbling over a toy."

"And so you were," Mary said, with her grim joviality. "Weren't you? Just like two children. Well, I hope it really is Ming . . ."

THE Italians left Kyoto sooner than they had planned. After a stay of four months, Tempelli announced that he had collected enough material not for one but for three separate books. They went on to Macao.

" I suppose we'd better see them off," Mary said. " Perhaps you ought to offer to drive them to the airport."

" Oh, do you think so? " said Donald. He had made a point of avoiding them recently. On the one occasion when Laura had telephoned to suggest that they should go on another of their expeditions to the junk-shops, he had told her brusquely that these days he was far too busy.

" I think it would be the right thing to do," Mary persisted.

" Oh, very well," Donald agreed grudgingly . . .

He had not seen the Italians for almost two weeks, and when Laura stepped into the car she at once struck him as both thinner and paler. Probably, he decided, the incessant damp heat had affected her health. Tempelli boomed away throughout the thirty-minute drive, about the progress of his work . . . imminent serialisation, the advances secured from publishers . . . Laura sat silent, her small ringless hands clasped in her lap and her profile turned from Donald.

It was only when they separated, the Italians to go through the customs and the Fielders to mount to the roof of the airport building, that Laura drew a package from her large brown suède handbag and held it out to Donald. " For you," she said. " For being so kind."

" What is it? "

" Can't you guess? "

He had guessed already, but stricken with embarrassment, he shook his head.

" The other cat. Sorry, fox. I thought that the one might be onely, so I wanted you to have them both."

" Oh . . . Oh, you shouldn't. I mean, you—you ought to keep it for yourself. You ought to . . ."

But she had already disappeared; first, swinging away abruptly from him, her arm on her father's, then, for a moment, turning to smile back and wave before she plunged into the obliterating throng, which hemmed in the barrier.

" What is it? " Mary asked as she went up the stairs before him. " What did she say it was? "

"Another fox. Like the one I have."

" Which one? I don't remember a fox."

"The gold one."

"Oh that. The cat." They were now leaning on the balustrade. "Let's see it."

Donald reluctantly undid the ribbon of the neatly-tied parcel and drew off the paper. Mary peered short-sightedly through her sun-glasses. "Pretty," she said. "Quite pretty. How much did you give for the other one?"

"I can't remember."

"You said that you'd got it for almost nothing. Didn't you?" But she realised that she was being ungenerous. "Anyway, it was nice of her to find another that's almost a pair. It shows that she took some trouble. She's not a bad girl, really."

Several weeks later Donald went on business to the old city of Kanazawa. That summer had been even more hot than usual and to its effects he ascribed his mood of persistent depression and lethargy. Even for his collecting he now had little heart.

There had been one postcard from Macao, a view of a street which might have been anywhere in the Orient, with a non-committal message, *We have found an apartment with a nice view, one air-conditioned room and rats and cockroaches. I am studying painting to pass the time. Papa sends love. Laura Tempelli.*

It was addressed to Mr. and Mrs. Fielder.

Mary told Donald, "Well, I suppose we'd better send a postcard back," but since this was a season when few of their good intentions got translated into action, the postcard was never written.

Kanazawa was cooler than Kyoto, and after he had finished his work Donald did not take a taxi to his hotel, but began to wander back along a dusty, tree-lined road, all hollows and protruding stones, like the parched bed of a river. He thought, as he often thought these days, of Laura Tempelli, remembering her in that blue crêpe-de-chine skirt and the white blouse which revealed her beautiful, straight neck and her fragile collar-bones. Although he had never displayed the fox—both it and its twin lay in a drawer, shrouded in tissue-paper—he could not have explained the reason. All he knew was that whenever he looked at it or even thought about it, he had a bewildering sensation of self-disgust and despair.

By force of habit he now stopped outside a corrugated iron shack, in front of which stood a battered wooden ice-box, the shells of two ancient gramophones and a wireless, and a trestle table on which was set out the kind of miscellaneous junk which, in the past, would have made his heart leap in eager expectation. With a dull eye he surveyed it all for a moment; then, just as he

was about to drag his feet on, he stopped, amazed. There were various wooden boxes on the table containing sets of Japanese plates, rice-bowls, sauce-bowls and tea-bowls, mostly incomplete and chipped; and among them—could it be possible—stood a pile of replicas of the Ming tea-bowl bought at the Kitano Market. He picked up one, dusted it off with his handkerchief, and examined it carefully. Yes, it was exactly the same: the same blue and white; the same design of peonies; even the same mark. The price of ten bowls was three hundred yen—about six shillings. He picked up the box and carried it into the shop . . .

" There are two possibilities, of course," he explained to Mary. " Either the bowls are really Ming, in which case I have a quite fantastic bargain and the coincidence is amazing—"

" Or else? "

"—Or else they're all Japanese copies of some Ming design."

"And Tempelli didn't know what he was talking about? I prefer that alternative."

" It's odd," Donald said unhappily.

" I don't think so. You've said yourself repeatedly that Japan is crammed with fakes."

" But Tempelli seemed so certain."

" Oh, Tempelli! He's a fake too! "

Donald put the bowls away in a cupboard, telling himself that tomorrow he would take them to an expert to have them appraised; but day succeeded day and they remained in their obscurity until suddenly, inexplicably, an idea occurred to him.

He waited until Mary had gone on one of her shopping trips to Kobe, and then from the bowls placed on top of each other in two piles in the recesses of the chest, he removed one—he could not now tell whether it was the one bought at the market or whether it belonged to the set from Kanazawa—took it up to his study and there began to pack it carefully in the square wooden box which had originally contained his Sung celadon piece. He took one of his visiting cards and, after much deliberation, wrote on it: *I always regretted not giving this to you. I hope it is not too late. Perhaps one day we shall again go round the junk-shops together.* Then he took another card, copied the message except for the last sentence, put this second card on top of the box and proceeded to make a parcel.

He set off in the car for the post office in a state of exhilaration; but at each intersection at which he had to halt this gradually leaked away . . . This gesture of apparent reparation was in fact

not one, since he knew—yes, he had to admit it to himself—that the bowl was worth no more than he had given for it. She would not realise that; she would think that there was only one such bowl, the one bought at the market, which she had so much wanted. She would be surprised, touched, profoundly grateful, perhaps even ashamed of her previous importunity. But was there not something degrading in buying all those emotions at so cheap a price? He wriggled in his sweat-soaked shirt in unease and shame.

The elderly post-office clerk examined the parcel in silence and then handed it to the clerk, even more shrivelled than himself, who was seated beside him. They conferred together in whispers, their heads close together. The first clerk then carried the parcel into the murky recesses of the huge hall behind him, where Donald could see him consulting a young man with a large head and an array of pens and pencils in the breast-pocket of his shining but well-pressed blue pinstrip shirt. The young man came forward and revealed a row of gold-capped front teeth to inquire: "To Macao?" in English.

"That's right."

The young man retreated and came back carrying three pink forms. "Would you please complete these, sir?"

"What *is* this?" Donald peered at the forms. "It's all in Japanese."

"No, sir. Japanese here. English here."

Donald began to write. It took him several minutes—particulars which seemed to him totally irrelevant had to be supplied—and in this heat the mere effort of copying identical words from one form to another filled him with exasperation. "There," he looked up to pronounce. But the young man had disappeared soundlessly and it was necessary for one of the two elderly clerks to summon him once more.

He took as long to examine the forms as it had taken Donald to complete them, and he appeared to be almost disappointed that he could find no mistake. "That is correct, sir," he announced. But again he peered at the forms. Donald, who had often reprimanded his Japanese employees for dallying on their way to and from the post office, now realised that he had been unjust to them. "Yes, sir. Now may I please see contents of parcel?"

"See what?"

"Please open parcel, sir."

"Is that necessary?"

"Yes, sir. I am sorry, sir."

"But I have written the contents on the declaration form. Look. *One tea-bowl. Value: three hundred yen.*"

"Yes, sir."

"Then why must I open the parcel?"

"Sorry, sir."

"It's ridiculous."

The young man looked down at the parcel and said nothing. The two elderly clerks went on with their work.

Donald held out the parcel. "Please take it," he said peremptorily.

The young man smiled politely as though at a feeble joke.

"Contents must be shown," he said.

"But it's all sealed. I can't undo the knots."

The young man opened a drawer below the counter and took out a pair of scissors, some string, and a pot of glue. He again smiled, but this time as though he were coaxing an obstinate child.

"This is regulation," he said.

Donald glared at him. "Oh, very well!" he all but shouted. He snatched the scissors and cut the string unnecessarily in three or four different places. He pulled off the paper and let it drop to the floor. Scattering wood-shavings across the counter, he jerked the bowl from its box. "Now, does that satisfy you?" he demanded belligerently.

As he said it, the bowl slipped from his sweaty fingers and crashed to the floor between the young man's feet. Everyone in the post office stared at the accident; later they would argue whether Donald had dropped the bowl or had hurled it down in his fury.

The young man stooped, amassed the scattered fragments and then placed them carefully on the counter which separated him from the white-faced, towering foreigner. "It is broken," he said unnecessarily.

"Yes, it's broken," Donald said.

"I am sorry. This is valuable perhaps?" He picked up one fragment and examined it closely, turning it over and over in his hand, as though he imagined that in this way he could discover the worth of the whole bowl.

"No. It doesn't matter." After his bellowing before the accident, Donald now spoke in a voice oddly attenuated and slack. "Forget it. Forget all about it."

He walked out leaving behind him paper, string, wood-shavings, and the chips and shards of the bowl.

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THE BEACH OF FALESA

IT IS the hour before tropical dawn on the hushed, grey, open sea. A boat glides by like a shadow, the moon going down behind her tall sails. The boat sails on—through the very slowly lightening night, through moonlight and music, the soft sea speaking against her sides—and is gone again.

Now it is nearer dawn, and the moon, still bright, lowering towards the glassy, quivering western rim of the South Sea. To the east, the great sky about-to-dawn is cloudless. And out of darkness, into dying moonlight, into rising dawn, the schooner glides again. A bird circles above it and wheels, crying sad and high, then flies away.

Two dark figures stand on the little deck, looking out into the neither night nor morning. The tall, broad, barehead figure, Wiltshire, his hair tossed in the wind, stands still, upright, tense and quiet. The short figure, the Captain, at the wheel, raises an arm to point.

Captain: "There, over there! D'you see? Behind the break of the reef . . ."

He speaks softly, intimately.

Dawn rises, darkness drains suddenly away from the cloudless sky, and the cries of birds begin to be heard as from far away and coming nearer: the cries of the wild duck and the man-o'-war hawk, the awakening Pacific sea-fowl. A solitary bird flies towards the line of the island, the lofty, distant wooded hills and the stretching shore.

Captain: "D'you see? Falesa. That's Falesa, the last village to the east." The Captain hands a pair of glasses to Wiltshire, who puts them to his eyes.

Through the twin circles of the glasses he sees the surf beating against the high cliffs, the thickly tree'd valleys, the spurs of mountains, the majestic woodlands, the white flash of streams down the glens, the tumbles of waterfalls, the tall breadfruit trees, the coconut palms, the scattered bamboo houses under the trees, and a few tails of smoke wisping up the sky.

Captain: "D'you see that bit of white there to the eastward? That's your house, Mister."

A NEW
DYLAN THOMAS
DISCOVERY

A coral island washed by the warm South Seas, tumbling with waterfalls and flashing streams, natives worshipping the serpent, the crab and the eel, rival white traders, one as gin-sodden and evil as the island is beautiful . . . these are the ingredients for The Beach of Falesa, one of Robert Louis Stevenson's most powerful stories. Dylan Thomas, revelling as always in the vagaries of human nature, plunged joyously into the maelstrom of the savage and the exquisite, the violence and the calm of this earthly paradise, to produce this brilliant story-script which, nearly a decade after his death, is to star his fellow countryman, Richard Burton.

The circles of the glasses move slowly to pick up a glimpse, between palms and breadfruits, of a white bungalow standing high above the beach.

Captain: " Built of coral. D'you see? Best station in the South Pacific. Strong and pretty and broad in the beam, easy to manage and used to knocking about, just like the women."

Wiltshire, the glasses dangling in his hand, still stares at the island, and speaks as though to himself, " I can see the starfish in the water and the parrot fish—red and purple and green."

The Captain shakes his head slowly.

Wiltshire: " Can you smell the wild lime? Trees and flowers, hibiscus and pomegranate."

The Captain raises his head to the land wind, sniffs, turns on the deck, and shouts below as loud as a bull with a megaphone and in a voice startlingly unlike the soft, intimate voice he has been using: " Ngavindi! Ngavindi! " A Kanaka boy appears and takes the wheel.

He speaks over his shoulder, again in his soft voice, to Wiltshire, " Breakfast, Mr. Wiltshire."

Great bunches of oranges decorate the stern of the boat; there are bunches of bananas hung from the topsails and stays. There is a chicken coop on the lower deck and one cockerel inside it. It crows to the tropical morning.

In the Captain's cabin, Wiltshire and the Captain sit at a small duty table, with glasses and a bottle of gin.

Wiltshire is a broad, dark-haired man in the middle thirties, stubbled about his broad jaw, shadowed under the eyes by dissipation or fatigue. He has a reckless twist to his mouth, but his eyes are contemplative, a man accustomed to some brutality and much loneliness, to excess and remorse. He looks into his glass, moving it slowly. A ship's clock ticks on the cabin wall.

The Captain, bald and small and ageless, benignly wrinkled, deeply tanned and sea-blown—an old salt soak, soft-mannered rogue and prop of all the Pacific bars, gossip of the islands—raises his glass, " You've got the best little trading station I ever seen." He drinks. " All shipshape and Bristol, clean as a skipper's cabin—" He darts a sly look around the cabin—" Maybe cleaner, snug as a pub in the snow, trim and homey, three rooms all spit and polish, you could drink off the floor. When Johnny Adams saw it—Johnny Adams with the club foot, him that was here before you—he took and shook me by the hand: this one with the mermaid on it."

He makes the tattooed mermaid on the back of his hand belly-dance as he speaks. " ' I've dropped into a soft thing here, Conrad,' Adams says. ' So you have,' I says, ' soft as fevvers.' "

The Captain looks at Wiltshire's glass. " Your breakfast's getting cold. I only saw him once after that—coughing and weeping, gibbering when it grew dark, peeping and sneaking and spying through the window chinks when the night comes on, squealing in his sleep like pigs. He couldn't get on with the natives or the whites or something. He carried a gun, day and night, but he couldn't have shot a whale; his fingers twitched, like this . . . Next time we came round, he was gone. Vamoosed. Took a chance passage in a ship from up west. Case saw him off." As he is speaking, a boat leaves the beach and moves towards the schooner.

Captain: " See a boat coming yet? "

Wiltshire nods, without turning.

Captain: " *That'll* be Case. *Mister* Case."

The Captain gets up and goes towards the cabin door, followed by Wiltshire.

Captain: " He's a *hard* case, too. But he plays the accordion beautiful. And see him playing cards! He'd strip the tattoo marks off your back! Very educating! Went to a fine school, too, back in England, but he got kicked out of there. Something he'd done. Bigamy, p'raps it was, I've forgotten. Yes, that's his boat. Whistling Jimmie fell out of that boat one night and was drowned

when he was drunk! That's a horrible death, drowned when you're drunk. Up comes all your past life in front of you and you're too boozed to see it."

Wiltshire: " Sweet place, Falesa! "

The Captain is mildly indignant: " The climate's very wholesome! Look at old Captain Randall, been drinking here like a herring for thirty years till he almost growed scales."

The boat from the island comes nearer. It is rowed by two Kanaka boys, and a white man sits in the stern.

Captain: " What'll you bet he ain't after buying gin? It's gin and cigars and then it's gin and *no* cigars and then when all the parleying's over he starts again with gin—he's an easy man to trade with, but very monotonous."

He waves to the approaching boat. The man in the stern waves his straw hat back.

Captain: " See his striped pyjamas and his little cigaroo? Very smart. Johnny Adams thought he was a damned sight *too* smart."

Wiltshire: " Tell me about this—Johnny Adams. What was he frightened of? "

The boat has drawn up to the schooner's side. Case climbs aboard. He is a smallish man, strong and wiry. His nose is hawk-hooked, his black beard neatly trimmed. His face is deeply lined, but whether by age or by a tropical disease of the past it is hard to tell. He carries himself with debonair confidence. He is dressed in perfectly laundered striped pyjamas. He takes off his panama in a salute, first to the Captain and then to Wiltshire. His jet-black hair is oiled flat back and glistening on his narrow head. He smiles, he speaks in faultless, cultivated English.

Case: " Good morning, Captain. The compliments of Captain Randall and myself. He is distressed he cannot pay you his own compliments in person. A slight indisposition."

He turns, smiling, to Wiltshire and politely, interrogatively, raises his eyebrows.

Captain: " Mr. Wiltshire, Mr. Case."

Wiltshire holds out his hand. After a barely perceptible pause, Case offers his and they shake.

Case: " A delightful name, Mr. Wiltshire. A delightful county. I myself am a Shropshire Lad. As a rival trader, may I be the first to say: Welcome to Falesa! I can recommend the food but not the liquor. The wild pig is delicious. You will like my partner, Captain Randall, too."

Captain: " How much copra you got this time, Mister? "

Case glances at a sheet of paper in his hand: " X tons."

Then, with an ironical smile, he addresses himself to Wiltshire: " Copra, Mr. Wiltshire! " He makes a gesture of wry distaste towards the Kanakas unloading the copra. " To think that both our livelihoods depend upon the indigestible interior of the coconut! We sell tinned salmon, washing blue, and treacle to the gullible islanders so much happier without them, and receive

in exchange the dried kernels of coconuts masquerading under the dark, charmed name of copra. Copra! Coconuts! My immortal soul is bound up in coconuts! "

With a sharp gesture he beckons to one of his own Kanakan crew, speaks fluently in the native dialect, then turns apologetically to Wiltshire. " I have instructed my boys to take your things to your bungalow. Nobody will interfere with them. Everyone is honest in Falesa, except about chickens, tobacco, penknives, and women."

The Kanakan crew is beginning to unload Wiltshire's trading goods into Case's boat: chests and cases, barrels and bales. Case turns to the Captain, hands him his sheet of paper: " And now, Captain! "

The Captain reads the paper: " Gin, cigars. More gin. Gin again. Gin again. You'll be smoking yourselves to death one fine day, Mr. Case." The Captain and Case move off. Wiltshire stands gazing at the island, as native boys hurry all around him about the unloading. Seen much nearer from the sea, the island seems to dip and rise, the giraffe-like coco palms bend down as though to graze.

Case and Wiltshire sit together in the stern of Case's boat. It is loaded with Wiltshire's goods and with cases of gin. The two Kanakan boys are rowing. On the island, Case and Wiltshire see the feathered mountains and land, heaving up in peaks and rising vales, falling in cliffs and buttresses crowned by clouds. Along the beach men and women and children stand waiting for the boat to come in.

The high, gay cries of the children can be heard above explosions of the surf. Case, reclined at ease in the stern, lazily indicates the waiting natives: " The committee of reception! All in its Sunday best! It's a festival day. There hasn't been another trader on this island since your predecessor—Mr. Adams. Look at 'em! Everything that can walk or crawl. Women, children, dogs, lizards, and—girls."

Case turns his head slightly in Wiltshire's direction and says casually, " We must get you a wife."

Wiltshire: " Yes, let it wait. I'll have a look around. I'm used to being alone. What frightened Johnny Adams off the island? "

Case: " Mice. He drank so much native spirit the mice ran over his bedclothes like bison. He used to hear noises up in the bush, terrible strange noises. It was his mice, with bugles. He used to see devils, so they say. Take no notice of the superstitious gossip of the island, Mr. Wiltshire. Are you a religious man? "

Wiltshire is gazing at the beach. He does not answer, but takes his pipe from his mouth and blows a mouthful of smoke out to sea.

Case: " A pity. They are all Wesleyans here, or Baptists."

Wiltshire: " And you? "

Case: " Ah! *I* was brought up in the Church of England;

at school I became a pantheist; at the university I embraced Buddhism, Confucianism, and the daughters of tobacconists; in my early manhood I was a pious Satanist, and celebrated the Black Mass from Tunbridge Wells to Honolulu; now, in my wiser years, I have married a Wesleyan Samoan."

As he speaks, the boat nears the beach. Boys and girls dive into the water and swim, calling and laughing around and under the water, a shoal of gay and dark-skinned fishes.

The boat draws up on the beach of Falesa. Case and Wiltshire step ashore and walk through the crowds, who ceremoniously make way for them, up the beach towards the village, and then follow, laughing and singing. Behind them now are the sounds of the surf and the sea-fowl. Snow-white birds fly above them. They walk under flowering acacias, hibiscus and magnolias, under lime tree and shaddock. The aged of the island stand at the doorways of their huts. One tall and powerful man stands alone under a tree. His chest and face are intricately tattooed.

Case: " He is Tahuku, the wizard."

Only the little brown children trot after the two white men as they leave the centre of the village. The men and women stand in the clearing under the trees, looking after them.

From the group of trees on the other side of the village comes a native girl. She is young and slender and light in colour. Her eyes are large, luminous and melting as are the eyes of all Polynesians. She wears no festival garlanding or decoration, but only the common dress of the village. Her body, her long black hair and her bright dress are shining wet from the sea or the streams.

Wiltshire sees her, and Case sees that Wiltshire sees her.

Case: " That is Uma."

He darts a quick look at Wiltshire, and the two white men walk on. The children who, calling and laughing, have followed them from the beach, stop suddenly at the sight of Uma and go no further. Uma walks past them, away from the centre of the village.

Now Case and Wiltshire approach a large dilapidated bungalow in a clearing a little way from the village and at the edge of the thick, encroaching bush—an unpainted, unmended, weather-beaten, board house with a rickety verandah. A negro comes out on to the verandah, clad as is Case, in striped pyjamas and panama; but, unlike Case, his clothes are untidy, tousled and creased as though he had slept in them. He is an enormous negro, with a wide, white face-splitting smile. He raises his panama at the sight of Wiltshire and Case with a friendly, or insolent, flourish.

Case: " The *second* of your three ' white ' trading rivals, Little Jack." Case and Wiltshire climb up the steps to the verandah.

Little Jack: " Good day, Mr. Wiltshire."

He slurs the word so that it sounds like " Welsher." Wiltshire looks sharply at him, but his great, sliced-melon of a smile is without guile. Wiltshire looks at Case as Little Jack steps aside and lets the two white men enter.

Case, politely: " Oh, yes, we all know your name."

Case and Wiltshire go into the living-room of the bungalow. Little Jack, following Case and Wiltshire, blocks up the doorway on to the verandah with his great bulk. He stands there smiling as Case says: " And your third white friend—to be."

The windows are shut and spattered with flies, dead and alive. Flies are buzzing everywhere. The roof is low and dark, stained with lamp smoke. Three unmade beds lie on the floor against the farthest wall. In a corner, on the floor, lies a litter of pans and dishes. In the middle of the room, squatting native fashion, sits a pale and bloated old man, the flies thick around and upon him. A bottle stands by his side. He is naked to the waist.

Case: " Captain Randall, the Father of the island."

IN the store or trading-room of Case's bungalow there is a dusty counter, and on it an old pair of scales. Of ordinary South Sea trading goods there is only a meagre show, and much of that stained, mouldy, neglected: some tinned foods, biscuits, hard bread, cotton stuff. But there is an excellent display of firearms and liquor.

Little Jack leans against the counter smoking a cigar, cleaning a gun, a glass beside him. At a table sit Case and Wiltshire, drinking. A pack of cards is strewn across the table. Wiltshire is sitting loosely in his camp chair, his clothes awry, his hair tousled. Case is immaculately sober.

The door between the storeroom and the living-room is wide open. Old Captain Randall is still squatted on the floor, his bottle in his hand.

Case, affectionately: " Dear Daddy Randall! Observe, Mr. Wiltshire, that fly-blown old grogpot guzzling and sousing there, and reflect! "

Randall: " Leave . . . me . . . . alone."

Case thrusts a half-full bottle in front of Wiltshire: " Drink, drink to our new friendship. May we both, as rival traders. load the necks of the natives with trinkets from Birmingham. May we drown them in bottles of polecat scent. Let us sell them tinned crab till they walk sideways. And in return: let them sweat till they bleed making copra for the pretty gentlemen." He raises his glass: " I give you—the pretty gentlemen! "

Then Case inches forward on his chair, conspiratorially nearer to Wiltshire, lowers his voice, narrows his eyes: " You're going to be lonely in Falesa. There comes a time when a man needs other company than men."

Wiltshire: " I like my own company because I don't object to anything I do." He speaks with the mulish monotonous logic of the drunk. " I'm tolerant about myself. I let myself do anything I like."

Case: " *She* would let you do anything you like as well."

Little Jack's black voice speaks suddenly with relish from the

counter: " And if she don't—tickle her in the teeth with a boot."

Wiltshire looks drunkenly puzzled. " Who d'you mean? "

Case assumes an air of innocent surprise. " Why, Uma, of course, who else? "

Wiltshire: " Uma? Uma? Who is Uma? "

Little Jack: " She's pretty enough to eat."

Case: " I pointed her out to you as we walked through the village."

Little Jack licks his chops as though he has just eaten: " Yum yum."

Case: " Why don't you marry her? "

Wiltshire: " I don't want your girl."

Case: " You admitted you *admired* her."

Wiltshire: " No. She was only a girl coming out of the trees, going by. I hardly caught sight of her. I wouldn't know her again."

Case, softly: " I saw your eyes."

Wiltshire: " I don't like native girls. I like being alone."

Case: " Uma's father was a white man, a gentleman, though a remittance. She speaks excellent English. And Uma's beautiful."

Wiltshire: " All right, all right, she's beautiful, she's pure as snow—and damned dark snow at that—she's young and clever and charming. She's everything you say, but why should *I* be *married* to her, *you* tell me that."

Case: " Oh, there's no harm in the marriage."

Little Jack: " I'm the chaplain! "

The sudden, deep interjection is startling, coming out of the dark corner where the negro stands almost unseen.

Case: " When we met, I said to myself, Now here comes a stranger—a delightful stranger—to our little community on this earthly paradise. Let us at once offer him all the hospitality a man well needs: drink, and a woman! "

Wiltshire drinks. Case leans closer, across the table, to Wiltshire, his voice lowered: " Think of the long hot, loveless nights alone on this little lost island. Alone in your dull, dead room, listening to the silly sea. Uma is beautiful. In your arms she'd be lying still and secret and safe, burning under your mouth."

Wiltshire drains his glass, staring, without seeing, in front of him. Case arises softly, and says in a whisper: " I'll put up the banns—immediately."

He goes out on to the verandah, followed by Little Jack grinning. They go down the steps into the chanting evening. Between them, in the village, men and women move under the trees and around the bamboo houses. There is the sound of the surf.

Case is playing his concertina. Captain Randall is playing the fiddle. The tune is a strange yet recognisable version of the Wedding March. They are sitting, playing at the bottle-laden table.

Wiltshire stands in the middle of the room, a glass in his hand. Near him, holding a book, stands Little Jack. He wears a clergy-

man's dog-collar of stiff white paper. They are both looking towards the open door leading to the verandah, beyond which can be seen the tropical starred night.

Uma comes in from the verandah, into the lamplit room. She comes in gravely and shy, her eyes looking down. She wears her bridal dress: a kilt of fine tapa, silkenly swathed; a necklace of white flowers; flowers behind her ears; a woven garland. Her feet are bare, but her ankles wound about with flowers. She crosses, and stands between Wiltshire and Little Jack.

Wiltshire moves a few steps towards her. His eyes are hot and reckless. For the first time she raises her eyes to his. She does not smile. Her eyes are beautiful and trusting.

Case and Randall stop playing. Randall fortifies himself with a swig from a bottle at his side. Little Jack begins the " wedding ceremony." Case allows himself, gently, sardonically, to smile.

Shyly, seriously, attentively, Uma listens. Wiltshire looks at her. As the " ceremony " continues, he glances at Little Jack with an expression of distaste, then looks again at Uma who is confident and tranquil. And Little Jack's voice, black, mellow, deep and unctuous, goes on throughout: " Dearly beloved . . . Those whom God hath joined let no man put asunder . . ."

Uma and Wiltshire join hands. Little Jack gives a rolled paper with a bow round it to Wiltshire, who puts it in his pocket. Little Jack smiles his great sliced-melon smile.

Outside Wiltshire's bungalow, Wiltshire and Uma are walking on under the trees towards their house and their marriage night. There is the sounding of the surf and the dim village chanting.

Wiltshire and Uma come into the moonlit bedroom of Wiltshire's bungalow. He strikes a match, lights a lamp. There is a bed in the corner. Uma looks around her calmly. Then she puts out her hand to Wiltshire. He moves towards her, but stops as she says, " Please! "

He looks at her uncomprehending.

Uma: " Please! For me. The little paper he gave. My wedding paper."

Wiltshire, softly: " No, no."

Uma: " Always I want to keep it."

And she smiles, beautifully, trustingly. Slowly, he hands her the paper. She holds it to her, standing near the table on which the lamp is shining. She looks up at him: " Now I am your wife forever." He catches her in his arms.

The paper falls on to the table, near the lamp. On the lamplit paper in copper-plate writing, are the words:

> *This is to certify that Uma, daughter of Faavo of Falesa, is illegally married to Mr. Wiltshire, and that Mr. Wiltshire can send her packing to hell whenever he pleases.*
>
> JOHN BLACKAMOOR, CHAPLAIN

WILTSHIRE's bungalow looks fresh and clean in the bright, morning sunlight. He comes out on to the verandah, smoking a pipe. He leans and looks at the village, at beach and sea. Uma is singing somewhere inside the bungalow.

Wiltshire: " Good morning, Falesa."

White-clad village women, with little dark children in their arms or held on their shoulders, like the women of Gauguin, go down to the sea. Wiltshire: " Good morning, sweet ladies."

And Uma still sings within. Wiltshire speaks lazily, leaning against the open door. " Uma, what are you singing? What is the name of the song? " But Uma sings on happily and does not heed him. And lazily he continues, as though he did not expect her to answer, " I think it's a song about love and . . . waterfalls and . . . wonderful golden girls and . . . coral seas and flowers and . . . lying about in the sun, Uma." He turns and goes indoors.

In the storeroom of Wiltshire's bungalow, Uma and Wiltshire are setting the store to rights. The trading goods, the tinned foods, the sweets, rice, biscuits, etc., are arranged on the shelves. There are large jars of salt. On the counter are bales of cotton goods, cheap trinkets, ribbons and ornaments, beads and brooches, umbrellas and panamas. Rolls of matting are propped against the counter. Uma is sweeping the floor with a broom of twigs.

As Wiltshire works on, he talks quite casually to Uma who, as casually, answers him. " Uma, why did you come and live with me? "

Uma: " Mr. Case, he told me you loved me."

Wiltshire: " I didn't know I did. But I do." And they both go on tidying and preparing the store.

At last Wiltshire stops and looks around him, at Uma, at the heaped goods, the merchandise waiting: " All spick and span! Just like my grannie's shop back home except there's no sherbet and toffee apples." Ceremoniously, " I declare this store open."

He crosses the room, flings the door wide, hearing the sounding of the surf. Uma at his side, he looks out at Falesa, at the green of the village dotted with coconut palms and breadfruit and houses. All over the village, men and women are stalking, silent, wrapped in their robes.

Then he goes out on to the verandah. He pulls a chair near to the storeroom door, sits on it, tilted back to the wall of the bungalow. Complacently, he lights his pipe.

" And now we wait for custom." Uma disappears indoors.

Wiltshire: " Roll up, you beautiful ladies of Falesa! Come on, you elegant gentlemen! " He cocks an eye at the sun, high in the cloudless sky.

Wiltshire is still sitting in his chair on the verandah. He looks at the sun. It is lowering down the sky. The villagers move among their houses and the trees, but no one approaches the bungalow.

Wiltshire, calling: " Uma! Uma! "

Uma comes out on to the verandah.

Wiltshire: " Trade's brisk. We're doing fine! Nobody's come. Nobody all day. This rate I'd better enlarge the premises."

Uma: " In Falesa they are silly people."

Wiltshire, in exasperation: " What do I care! They can stand on their heads and howl to the moon so long as they trade. They can crawl backwards and bark like sea lions so long as they buy and bring copra." Perplexedly, " What's wrong? Why don't they come? "

It is early evening. Case is seated on the steps of his verandah, a knife and a piece of wood in his hands. Expertly he is working the wood to a smooth surface. Below him stands a group of villagers, among them the tall, powerful, tattooed native, Tahuku, the wizard. He is talking in native dialect. The other villagers nod vigorously and loudly assent to what he is saying. Occasionally Case, not looking up from his carving, puts in a word in native, a word that sets Tahuku off again.

Behind Case can be seen, through the open door of the trading-room, Little Jack selling merchandise to village women.

The talk of Tahuku and the natives grows in volubility and excitement. Case fans the flames every now and then with a few words. There is a shout, and Case turns his head to see where it comes from.

Coming towards the bungalow, out of the encroaching bush, walks a young, handsome native of a noble and dignified appearance. Behind him, laden with baskets of copra, come his men. Case rises to his feet. He addresses the young native in the dialect, then repeats in English: " Salutations, Mæa."

And the young native, Mæa, inclines his head in greeting.

Case with a gesture of the hand and a word in dialect, dismisses Tahuku and the rest and goes down the steps to Mæa. He walks side by side with Mæa, followed by the native bearers, towards a shed at the side of the bungalow and unlocks it. It is half full of copra. The natives carry their loads of copra into the shed.

It is evening and the moon is shining. At Wiltshire's bungalow there is the sound of sad, insistent chanting. Fires are lit before some of the native houses among the trees. Wiltshire stands rakishly at the door of the storeroom, a glass in his hand.

Wiltshire: " Come on, you misbegotten ladies! Roll up, you monkey gentlemen, roll up! Everything for sale! You bring your copra and you take your choice! All bargains here! Tinned pork and marbles! Cough drops and calico! Combs for the bald 'uns! "

His voice is slurred and excited: " Plug tobacco for the babies! " Suddenly he tosses the contents of his glass over the verandah, slumps down in a chair, and looks at beach and village, moon, sea, stars: " Tomorrow is another day. You'll come tomorrow."

All the time in the background is the sad chanting, the insistent accompanying rhythmic hand-clapping of the villagers by their night fires. Uma comes out on to the moonlit verandah.

Wiltshire: " Sit down by me, Uma."

But she stands a little away from him timidly.

Wiltshire: " It's all right, love. I'm not angry. Never with you. Tomorrow everything'll be fine and dandy." Uma puts her arm round his shoulder.

Wiltshire: " Uma, why do they sing like that every night? Are they sad? "

Uma: " No."

Wiltshire: " Are they happy? "

Uma shakes her head slowly: " No."

Wiltshire: " Why do they sing, then? "

Uma: " They always sing at night."

Then they are silent. The sea sounds on the beach. The voices are chanting . . .

At a stream in the early morning, some dozen young men, young women and children sit silently in a half-circle, wrapped in their clothes. They are quite still, silently staring in the same direction at Wiltshire's bungalow.

Inside, Uma is sitting at an old-fashioned English sewing-machine, working it with patience, incompetence, and childish curiosity. She is singing to herself.

Wiltshire calls to her from the other room: " Do you know what day it is today? It's *tomorrow*! It's like I said. It's the day when everything's going to be fine and dandy."

Uma sings softly on, but looks, for a moment as he speaks, sad and troubled. Wiltshire does not notice. He goes out of the living-room on to the verandah. His walk is buoyant. Suddenly he stops at the sight of the silent starers each side of the stream, some way from the bungalow, the robed, silent, staring boys on a boulder in midstream. They are all staring towards the house. But the crowd is greatly increased. The far bank of the stream is lined for quite a way now with standing figures. Perhaps there are as many as thirty men and women, and many more children. There are two half-circles of villagers, each side of the stream, and behind the farthest half-circle, a still, standing line of them—graven images. It is a dead-silent, dead-still gathering, who stare directly and unwaveringly at him.

Far behind the farthest unmoving line of standing starers, a few village women, white and scriptural, move, or seem to glide in the quivering sunlight, serene and unperturbed about their business.

Wiltshire moves down another verandah step, staring all the time at *them*.

He begins to walk, very slowly, towards the silent watchers. " All right, I'm coming your way."

As he approaches the first half-circle this side of the stream, there comes from the watching crowd a low, indistinct murmur of voices, an undercurrent and spreading whisper of sound more like a muffled and mumbled prayer than anything else. He comes nearer. To cross the stream he has to pass close to three little boys at one end of the first half-circle, three boys wrapped in their sheets, with shaved heads and topknots. They dart quick glances at each other as Wiltshire comes near, but stick their ground, unnaturally still and solemn.

He comes nearer, and the murmur of the gathering dies. It seems that, passing the three small boys, he must touch them. And suddenly there is a wink and gulp of terror in their faces. One of the boys jumps up and is off like a flash, squealing. The other two jump up and try to follow but fall together to the ground, tangled in their sheets. In a second, they slip out of their sheets and flash off naked. And among the watchers, who have not moved, there is a sudden, quick bark of laughter.

Now Wiltshire walks slowly past the silent unmoving starers. Silence. An old woman moans, a moan of piety and superstitious horror. From somewhere in the crowd comes one high strangled cry of invocation or of warning.

Silence.

Wiltshire walks on. The watchers do not turn their heads as he goes by. Only their bright eyes follow him, then again stare directly ahead.

And Wiltshire is striding across the green of the village, leaving the gathering behind. Under the breadfruit trees and palms he goes, past empty houses, their black-eyed doors open, and unattended fires. He talks to himself as he goes: It frightens a man to be alone. To know that there is nobody but himself. It frightens a man to be alone, and not to be sure he *is alone*. But worst of all, it frightens a man to be alone in a mob and not to know what they are doing or why, and when nobody will tell him at all . . .

Case is sitting on a step of his verandah, indolently carving a little head out of wood. The door of the trading-store is open. Little Jack is in the store, a cigar in his mouth, serving some native customers. There is the soft babble of their voices.

Wiltshire: " Trade's brisk."

And Case looks up and smiles as Wiltshire comes up.

Case: " You find it the same? The store thronged, the ladies haggling and dickering, the copra house chock-a-block? Have some gin? "

Wiltshire: " No to both questions. No gin, and no trade. This morning I found half the village squatting on its backside, staring at my house. They didn't speak. They didn't move."

Case: " Oh, the cautiousness of these cocoa-coloured diehards! "

Wiltshire: " They looked at me like people look at a leper. Or a man with a curse on him. It seemed like they were praying.

They've got some sort of jinx on me. They won't come near me. They won't trade or speak."

Case, ironically: "What could you have done? Blasphemed their ancient gods? Robbed their temples? No, no . . ."

Captain Randall, sodden, obese, shuffles on to the verandah through the living-room door. He makes a few feeble efforts to catch with his hands some invisible spots and presences that dance before him. Belches, and flops down in a rickety cane chair by a table on which is a gin bottle and an ancient gramophone. He pours himself a shaky drink.

Wiltshire: "I'm tabooed all right. And there's a real solid *reason. Sane as a ship's biscuit. I'm going to find out. I want* to talk to the chiefs, to the elders, to whoever-it-is."

Case: "There's a powwow in the Speak House tonight. I can take you along—I don't swear that they'll listen . . ."

That night there is a large crowd of villagers, men, women and children, outside the Speak House. They are clustered round the doorway; standing in thick, chattering knots; peering in at the windows. The mob at the doorway opens. Hedged about by young village men in native dress and ornament of important occasion, Wiltshire and Case appear.

They walk together into the Speak House. In the centre of the room, are the five chiefs. They sit on mats. Each has a fan in his hand, a fan plaited from young leaves of the coconut tree.

One is clad in pyjamas. His cruel face is tattooed. He is sodenly corpulent. One very old and puckered chief, in the centre of the group, wears elegant, pointed shoes. One of the young chiefs, handsome, proud, is clad in white kilt and jacket. He has a very intelligent face. It is Mæa.

One of the chiefs is Tahuku, the wizard.

Before the chiefs, two other mats are spread out.

As Wiltshire and Case enter, the old chief with the shoes motions them to sit on the two mats. Case and Wiltshire sit. At the open doorway, the crowd, hissing, chattering, cranes and jostles to look on.

Case, in native, addresses the House. When he stops, there is silence.

Wiltshire: "Tell them I've come to do them good. I've come to bring them trade and civilisation."

Case speaks. The old chief with the shoes answers.

Case: "He says they have quite enough civilisation, thank you. They have more guns, gin, and disease than they know what to do with."

The old chief speaks again.

Wiltshire: "Tell him I bring no guns, or gin, or disease. I come to do honest trade."

Case addresses the House again. At his remarks the old chief looks disapproving, but the chief in pyjamas laughs out loud, nudges his neighbour, looks with lewd, moist eyes at Wiltshire.

Then Tahuku speaks. The crowd at the door, which has been very softly murmuring throughout, now becomes utterly quiet. But, as Tahuku speaks, the crowd suddenly moans. All together. Angry no longer, but grieving and fearful.

Case, whispering: " It's a bad business."

Wiltshire, grimly: " Ask them why I'm tabooed."

Again, Case speaks, very briefly. Mæa answers, in native, but he is stormed down indignantly by the others.

Wiltshire: " Tell them I'm a regular trader. I trade for copra. I pay a fair price. If what they want's a present all round, I'll do that. Clothes or food or . . ."

A few words from Case. A few words from the chief in pyjamas.

Then Mæa speaks again, a few words.

Case: " Mæa does not want bribery."

Wiltshire: " I want to know why the village bars me. What have I done to them? Get a straight answer, can't you? Gabble, gabble . . ."

Case speaks again in native. There is a hubbub of argument from the chiefs. Then the old chief with the shoes raises his hand. There is sudden silence.

Case touches Wiltshire's shoulder: " Come on. The palaver's over."

They both rise. Case bows to the chiefs. Wiltshire does not bow. They walk out. As Wiltshire goes through the doorway, the crowd about it shrinks away on either side of the door without a word. The villagers press and jostle against each other, so that nothing of them, their bodies or their clothes, will touch him.

Wiltshire's back is to the crowd, his shoulders set. Case is talking to him with hardly veiled irony, " You should have bowed ceremoniously."

Wiltshire: " I bow to no one."

Case: " It made a bad impression."

Wiltshire: " I don't aim to impress. I wanted the truth. What is it? " Wiltshire turns to face Case. " Tell me! "

Case's voice changes: " They won't have anything to do with you. They're frightened of you."

Wiltshire looks amazed: " Are you crazy? "

Case: " *I'm* not. It's they who won't go near you."

Suddenly, Case takes Wiltshire's arm and walks away with him towards the bush climbing from the end of the village. In the distance drums are beating. Case stops and says, " I have never warned you. Look out for the beach of Falesa. Watch your step. Do not trust one of these outwardly Christianised and civilised islanders—I except your dear wife, a treasure among women. Inwardly, they are as savage as their grandfathers. And their grandfathers! Beware of them. The souls of the dead haunt the bush. They rise up out of the ground like butterflies. They are like mist. You walk into them, and you vanish, you are dispersed. They worship the serpent, and the crab, and the eel. And harpies,

more beautiful than any woman, who sing like turtles. The ghosts of beautiful women always fly backwards so that you cannot see the worm marks on their faces. And there are cannibal ghosts. The living eat the dead, and so the dead must eat the living. The ghosts tear out the eyes of the living, because the eye is always sweet and dainty. Yes, *those* are the things they believe. Never forget that. What is sacred is dangerous. It is dangerous to interfere with death. Now you know why I could not interfere when Johnny Adams died. I had no wish to run foul of *them*."

THERE are opened cases of dress material on the counter in the trading-store of Wiltshire's bungalow. Uma is wearing a bright, flowered, store dress, short and cut low. There is a ribbon in her hair, a cheap bead necklace round her throat. Her cheeks are rouged, her lips painted. She has a looking glass in her hand. She is holding some dress material across her shoulders, admiring it in the glass.

Wiltshire comes in. His face is grim, his eyes burning. He thrusts her aside.

Wiltshire: "Get that dress off you. And those beads. And that doll's ribbon. You look like a slut from Papeete. I'm no drunken sailor with a month's pay in my pocket. Scrub that slime off your face."

Uma is standing still and upright, looking directly at him. She does not move, or turn her cool, sad gaze from his.

He comes nearer to her, very near, his eyes wild, his voice harsh. But she does not flinch.

Wiltshire: "Don't you speak to me either? I'm taboo. Did you know that? I'm taboo. I frighten people. Do I frighten you? I'm taboo. I'm doomed, I'm damned. I turn the coconut milk sour. Listen to me, my wife! Can you tell me something? Just one little thing. That's all I want to know. One little thing. Why am I taboo?"

And now Uma's expression changes. She looks at him in amazement. Her poise is forsaken. Her hands go to the low-cut top of her dress, as though she were shielding nakedness.

Uma: "You do not know? You do not understand?" Softly, "Oh God, help me now!" She looks at his eyes. Her trace of a smile is almost compassionate. "It is me. The taboo belongs to me."

And she turns and goes into the room behind the trading-store. Wiltshire does not move, but stands there, lost, awaiting her. And she comes back, into the store. She has changed her store dress for the everyday white dress of the island, plain, ungarlanded. She has wiped away paint and rouge. She walks across the store to the verandah door, her head high. Wiltshire watches her, a dawning comprehension in his eyes—that, and love. At the door she turns towards him.

Uma: "I must go now. I am ashamed before you. All the time

I thought: *He knows. He knows it is me, all the time, all the time.* And he does not care. *He loves me.* He does not care."

Wiltshire comes to her. He stands quite near her, does not touch her, looks, simply, at her as though for the first time. He speaks as though he is himself surprised by the inevitability of what he is saying: " And I don't care."

Uma: " I must go now. You see, when I am gone, people will come. Everybody will come because I am gone. The taboo has gone. You will have copra. You will be rich."

Wiltshire, slowly: " I don't care about the taboo, now. Not now. Nothing matters except you. I would rather have you than anything under the sun."

And, slowly, he puts his arms around her . . .

It is night and there is a moon. Wiltshire is sitting on the floor of the verandah, his back against the wall and near to the dark open door. His arm is round Uma. She has her head on his shoulder. Her eyes are wide and dreaming. She is looking through the night at her past.

Uma: " We travelled from island to island, but we were never happy. Mariki, Nanuti, Tapitua, Fakarava, Hawaii—and the big towns too, Papeete, Apia . . ."

Wiltshire: " Your father, Faavo your mother, and you. A white man from England, a dark woman from the island, and Uma, my love, who wasn't white or dark—and all the time he gambles and he drinks and he looks for easy money and it never comes. I know, I know."

Uma: " You know. You know my story."

Wiltshire: " But I don't know how you came to Falesa."

Uma: " It was Mr. Case. He brought us here. He gave us a house."

Wiltshire: " And then? Then he made love to you, the little gentleman with the big words . . ."

Uma: " No. I said *No*."

Wiltshire: " *No*, Mister Case. And then? "

Uma: " He went away. And one day nobody speaks to us. They take up their mats when we go to church and go away. Nobody will speak. But girls shout after me: 'You will get no husband.' For ever and ever. All men are afraid. It was *talo pepelo*. A lie. *You* came. *You* were not afraid. *You* were not ashamed of me. *You* married me. Oh, I love you too much."

And Uma and Wiltshire kiss.

Wiltshire, softly: " Tomorrow I see Case. Tonight, we sleep." They rise and go indoors.

From the bungalow can be seen the village. But all the village is not sleeping. Out of the moonlit trees, in little separate groups, silently come natives who take up their positions opposite the bungalow, the other side of the stream. In their white robes like grave-clothes, they sit and stare . . .

IT is the beach next morning, the surf, the reefs, the sea, the canoes far out, the birds wheeling high. Palm trees cast shadows on the sand. A group of little girls is seated, singing, on the beach. Suddenly they stop singing. And the smallest girls reach out to touch with their hands the hands of the others for protection. Wiltshire is walking along the beach, looking all about him. He sees the distant figure of Case and hurries on towards him.

Case stands on the beach looking at a boat nearing the island. The crew's singing rises. Astern of the boat is an awning and under it sits a white man. Villagers run past Case, from their houses, from the groves, to the beach and boat. Noisily and waving, children skip and prance at the edge of the surf. Case watches them with a cynical indulgence, hands in pockets.

Wiltshire, from behind Case: "Turn round." And Case whips round.

Wiltshire: "Take your hands out of your pockets." Case makes no move. And Wiltshire hits him hard across the face with his open hand.

Wiltshire: "Now will you take your hands out?"

Case edges his hands out of his pockets. One hand slides towards his hip pocket. Wiltshire grasps the sliding hand and twists it savagely. A knife drops on to the sand.

Wiltshire: "Remember last night? You said the taboo on me was secret and nasty. I know how nasty now. I know the secret now."

Case is apparently not listening to what Wiltshire is saying. His hand is stroking his cheek, on which Wiltshire's blow is still burning. Case speaks very slowly, from between tight-drawn lips, with a kind of venomous shocked surprise: "You hit me!"

Wiltshire: "Because Uma wouldn't let you put your dirty claws on her, you had her tabooed. You poisoned the villagers with some baby-scaring trash about Uma so that they wouldn't have anything to do with her, so that they were frightened of her."

Case makes a move to pick up the dropped knife, but Wiltshire, in a second, has his foot on Case's hand. And Wiltshire picks up the knife and tries his finger along the edge.

Wiltshire: "You scared Johnny Adams off the island with the same mumbo jumbo you used on Uma, didn't you?"

He takes a step nearer Case: "Didn't you? I think I should cut your tongue out. And then you 'married' me to Uma so that your taboo would work on me as well, so that there wouldn't be *two* traders on this Island. So that you could get all the copra. Didn't you? And you thought I'd be a lily-livered skulker too, like Adams, and slink off? Oh, no, not me. I'm staying. But first of . . ."

Wiltshire draws back his fist. Now the air is loud with the salutations of villagers and the clamour of children. The white man is getting out of the boat at the edge of the surf. He is dressed in white duck clothes, with helmet, white shirt, and tie. He carries a white

sunshade. The children dance about him in delight, but suddenly there are cries from the villagers.

The white man looks up from the children at Wiltshire and Case fighting. Wiltshire knocks Case to the ground. Case rises unsteadily and is floored again. He lies where he falls, in the sand, and Wiltshire stands over him. The white man moves towards them. The villagers make a path for him. He hurries up.

Stranger: " Stop! "

Wiltshire turns round, his face savage, and confronts the stranger with brutal truculence: " What do *you* want? D'you want to see me kick him in the fangs? "

But Case has risen and is moving off, his eyes fixed with hatred on Wiltshire. At Wiltshire's words and the tone of his voice, the still crowds gathered behind the stranger begin a suppressed but angry murmur.

Stranger: " Who are you? "

Wiltshire: " I'm Wiltshire. I'm the new trader here. And who the hell are you? "

Stranger: " My name is Jenkins. I am a missionary." His voice is liltingly Welsh. His face is stern.

Wiltshire: " You look like one. Come on, I've got a job for you. And I want two of your crew as well."

Missionary: " Do you now? Would you like my boat too? "

Wiltshire: " I'm not asking any favours. I want you to do something for me. I want your help."

Missionary: " That's better talk now."

Wiltshire: " Because you're the only person who can help me. Will you come with me? Please."

Missionary, dubiously: " Well, I'll take a chance."

The missionary turns and calls out in native to his crew. Two of them join him. They are powerful men. They scowl at Wiltshire. The missionary steps up to the side of Wiltshire, and together they walk up the beach. The two native crew walk close and protectively behind.

Missionary: " Where are we going? "

Wiltshire: " To my place."

The missionary and Wiltshire, closely followed by their guard, are walking up the steps of the verandah of Wiltshire's bungalow and into the trading-room. In passing, Wiltshire quickly, so quickly that it is scarcely possible to see what he is doing, tears a brass ring off the thin blind on the window.

They walk through into the living-room. Uma is there. The missionary takes off his pith helmet. Tufts and little thickets of wiry white hair spring out from the sides of his head, like hair on a clown's head. His white eyebrows are jutting and very thick. Beneath them his eyes are bright and black, missing nothing.

Missionary: " Why Uma, my dear! Well, well! "

He addresses Wiltshire: " We are old friends." Uma curtsies. The missionary looks from Uma to Wiltshire, then back to Uma.

Uma: " *We* are husband and wife."

Wiltshire: " Uma, give us your marriage certificate."

Uma puts her hand quickly to the breast of her dress.

Wiltshire: " Come on. You can trust me."

He puts out his hand and, trustingly but reluctantly, Uma brings out her marriage certificate from the breast of her dress. She hands the paper to him.

Wiltshire turns to the missionary, looking at him squarely. " I was married to Uma by Little Jack, the black man. You know him? "

Missionary: " Badly."

Wiltshire: " This certificate was written by Case. Do you know him too? "

Missionary: " For my sins. And for his."

Wiltshire: " Then you can guess what's in it? "

Missionary: " I can."

Wiltshire: " And now I've found that Uma is tabooed. Case saw to that because he couldn't have her for himself. And so long as I'm with her, I can't trade, and the curse is on me too. All right, I understand that. So this what I am going to do."

And Wiltshire tears up the marriage certificate and scatters the pieces on the floor.

Uma wails out, " Ave! Ave! " She begins to clap her hands and cry with grief. Wiltshire catches hold of her hand.

Wiltshire: " And this is what I want *you* to do. Marry us properly, with ring and witnesses and everything." In Wiltshire's open hand is the brass ring he has torn off the window-blind.

In the living-room of Wiltshire's bungalow, Wiltshire and the missionary are sitting at the table. Uma pours the tea as the missionary speaks. " Mr. Wiltshire, I have to thank you for a very lovely pleasure. I have rarely performed the marriage ceremony with more grateful emotions."

He takes a sip from his cup, then lifts a bushy, white, inquiring eyebrow at Uma, " Is this tea? "

Uma, standing near, waiting for appreciation, nods her head.

Missionary, to Wiltshire: " I shouldn't really be in these parts till the rainy season—it comes down in buckets, worse than Wales—but I've been hearing strange stories about Falesa. It's queer how you hear these rumours flying across from island to island. After a long time you begin to *see* them almost, like puffs of smoke coming over the water. You *feel* there's something strange and wrong somewhere, in the way your boys sing as they row when you're out in the mission boat."

Wiltshire lights a cigar.

Missionary: " I heard stories too, mind, about Johnny Adams with the club foot going so sudden, scared off the island, so they said, but I knew there was strangeness blowing before I heard a word. And then, when I stepped off on the beach . . ."

Wiltshire: " You were right. There's strange things happening, and I'm not so far off knowing why."

Missionary: " Tell me all you know—" He bends forward to listen, his eyes bright under the white eyebushes, looking keenly at Wiltshire and at the glowing end of his long cigar . . .

. . . Wiltshire puts his fingers to his cigar to take it out of his mouth. The cigar has burnt down to the end. Wiltshire: "—and all the rest, I *guess*."

Missionary: " Case is a bad enemy. You were wrong when you said *you* were the devil hereabouts, Mr. Wiltshire. He has a very clever representative on the island already."

Wiltshire: " And he gives himself the devil of a lot of trouble too, just to be the only trader and get all the copra there is."

Missionary, slowly: " I wonder if that is all he wants." The missionary rises from the table. " Now you leave the taboo to *me*. I'll show these backsliders what for. I'll give them a sermon from First Kings, xix, that'll wither 'em in their pews. I'm the only man in the world who can use the Welsh hwyl in Polynesian. And I'll see Case too." He collects his pith helmet and parasol.

Uma comes, shyly, into the room. He gives a little bow. " Thank you for your hospitality, Mrs. Wiltshire." And he shakes Wiltshire's hand and goes out.

The missionary is standing outside Case's bungalow. The doors along the verandah are closed.

Missionary, calling sternly: " Come out, Mr. Case."

Case's voice answers mockingly from within, " Come in, Mr. Jenkins." The missionary goes up the steps.

Case stands now at the open shutters. He wears white trousers, but is bare to the waist. Around his neck are hung native necklaces of sharks' teeth and little bones. His feet are bare. His arms and chest are intricately and hideously tattooed all over, not with sailors' flags and anchors, names, serpents, arrowed hearts, but with tribal signs and caste-marks.

Missionary, softly: " Very nice, very nice. I should have known."

Case: " You with your sun-brolly and your Bible, your tracts and your gimcrack chapels, spreading your message over the islands like a bucket of white-wash, hymning and ha-ing, what could *you* know? "

Missionary: " So you have turned savage."

Case: " I was savage from birth. I was Caliban's son brought up for the church. I was a child suckled by wolves, brought up to brush my fangs and wash my paws before meals. I was a savage brought up to say ' sir,' respect my elders . . ."

The missionary shakes his head ruefully as he looks at Case, ironically attitudinising, his hand at the barbaric ornaments around his neck, the tribal signs, the painted eyes, the exotic tattooing clear on the brown of his arms and chest.

Missionary, in disgust: " You're a fraud, Mr. Savage Case. Hear you are practising your hellish hanky-panky just to keep other traders off Falesa. You profess to love Evil for its own sake—and it's all for profit."

Case: " I want no other trader here because I like the island too much. I want no stranger to share it. This is my island." Then he speaks with a kind of ironic contempt, satirising his own romanticism. " I know all the noises and smells of it. I know the beach and the bush and the wild pigs and the duck in the mangroves and the beetles on the vine and the smell of bats in the trees. I know the cries of all the birds in the haunted bush and every chime of the surf; acacias, magnolias, hibiscus, passion flowers, pomegranate; the stars of the night fires outside the houses at deep blue midnight; the drums high away up in the forgotten wood; the death songs; the death dance . . . I love the ancient fear of Falesa."

Missionary: " And, by God, *I'll* drive it out! "

Outside the chapel can be heard the voices of the natives singing inside, then the sound of their praying. And then the voice of the missionary raised in passionate exhortation.

In the chapel pulpit stands the missionary preaching with great eloquence. Mæa is in the audience.

The missionary raises his finger in admonition, storms, warns and wheedles. The congregation responds to his every mood, approving, shuddering, giving little cries or grunts of grief and contrition as he moves them. He speaks loudly the words, " *Case, Wiltshire, taboo.*" Mæa, sitting in the front of the chapel as befits a chieftain, nods in solemn approval.

The missionary comes out of the chapel. The grieving and humiliated villagers, slowly returning to their homes, to the beach, to the bush, to the green of the village, look away from the missionary in silent guilt and shame.

And then Case, immaculate in white ducks, comes jauntily out of the trees and approaches the missionary. When he is quite near he raises his hand with a dramatic flourish to command attention. The villagers stop and surround Case and the missionary.

Case: " So here is the holy man. You have been preaching against me, but that was not in your heart. You have been preaching for the love of God—but that was not in your heart."

He translates for the benefit of the uncomprehending crowd whose stillness and silence is now compounded of guilt and shame towards the missionary and fear of Case. The missionary does not speak, holds himself firm and erect, his hands steady on his parasol, his eyes meeting Case's with a fierce disdain.

Case: " Shall I show you what is in your heart? "

He turns to the villagers, translates, all with perfect, insolent ease and plausibility. And then, turning again to the missionary, he makes a deft and rapid pass at his breast. Rapidly, professionally,

he flashes his hand in the air, opens his hand. In his palm lies a silver dollar. He shows it, flashing it in his hand, before the eyes of the villagers who step back fearfully. A low and terrified murmur spreads through the crowd.

Case: " A silver dollar! Your heart is full of the greed of money." He translates quickly.

The word and the news of the miracle ripple through the voices of the crowd, and amazement rolls in their eyes. Case flings the coin to the ground, and those nearest it back quickly away, as though it were a contamination.

Case: " What is your tongue made of? " He makes a deft and rapid pass about the missionary's mouth, flashes his hand in the air, opens his hand. In the palm of his hand moves a live scorpion.

Missionary, ruefully to himself: " Oh, that I had learnt conjuring instead of Hebrew! "

Case flings the scorpion to the ground, and the crowd in horror retreat from it. Some of them hubbubbing with horror, their guilt and shame towards the missionary vanquished by their fear of Case, cluster around him.

Missionary, to Case: " You've won for the moment, with your little parlour tricks. But don't think you'll win for long. I've buried worse than you, Mr. Case. I may do you that service yet." He goes off, followed by a small band of the faithful.

Mæa has watched the conjuring and the vanquishing of the missionary aloofly from a place on the edges of the crowd, above which he towers. Now Case sees him for the first time, beckons him with a gesture of the head. Mæa turns on his heel and walks away, not following the missionary, but alone.

In the storeroom of Wiltshire's bungalow, all the goods are laid out ready and waiting for the customers who do not come. Wiltshire looks around bitterly at the stacked shelves, the rolls of stuff, the cases, then takes his rifle from a corner, slings it over his shoulder, and goes out. From the living-room can be heard the noise of Uma's sewing-machine.

Wiltshire walks alone through a grove. He hears, coming from behind a thick flowering bush, the sound of soft and childlike, delighted and delightful laughter, the sound as of children at play. Curiously, he puts aside the ferns and leaves and sees two enormous native women, squatted on the ground, smoking clay pipes. Their high, lovely, childlike laughter dies. They look up at him in horror. And with a wry smile he lets the parted leaves and ferns meet again and goes on through the grove.

Now Wiltshire is walking through bush. He hears in the near distance the snapping of undergrowth, and stops. He unslings his rifle, holds it ready. Silently he moves towards the noise, which goes away from him as he moves. He catches a glimpse of a white panama hat some distance away among the leaves. Very quietly, he follows the hat, then stops.

He sees Case walking away from him down a narrow path that threads among ferns and flowers of a wide grove. Case has a rifle and a sack slung over his shoulder. Then Case seems to disappear, to vanish as if by magic through a seemingly impenetrable wall of bush.

Wiltshire waits some moments, then follows the path that Case has trod. He looks everywhere for the opening through which Case must have vanished. But he cannot find it.

Now Wiltshire is walking through another part of the bush. He comes into a wide clearing. Crossing this, he hears native voices. And into the clearing comes the young chief Mæa leading his men, with spears and rifles, on a hunting expedition. Mæa gravely salutes Wiltshire in passing. With a surprised expression, Wiltshire watches him go on into the bush . . .

In a coconut grove in the early evening, Wiltshire, Uma, and Faavo are making copra.

Uma: " All day every day we make copra. Why? "

Wiltshire: " No one will work for us, that's why. We've got to make it ourselves."

Uma: " Why do people want copra? "

Wiltshire: " Because they sell it for money."

Uma: " But why do *white* men want copra? Do they eat it in England? "

Wiltshire: " You're ignorant, that's what you are . . ."

Uma: " Yes, ignorant all the time."

Wiltshire: " They use it for . . . understand? "

Uma: " Yes. Still ignorant."

Outside Case's bungalow the door of the copra shed is open. Mea and some of his men, who are bearing great loads of copra, stand there. Inside the shed stands Little Jack. Some of Mæa's men take in a load of copra. Little Jack examines it, values it, calls out the price to Mæa.

Mæa: " No."

Little Jack looks up in surprise, repeats the price.

Mæa: " No. Fetch Case."

And Little Jack goes out of the shed towards the bungalow. Mæa stands silent, handsome and aloof among his men.

Case comes up to Mæa outside the copra shed.

Case speaks in native to Mæa.

Mæa: " No, I speak English."

Case, casually: " That's what you think, you noble illiterate hoddy-doddy with your bags of nut meat." In a louder voice. " We give you a fair price. X per Y ton."

Mæa: " No. Missionary tell it is not fair price. He say you cheat. You give me Z per X ton."

Case: " I'll be boiled in Battle-Axe gin if I do! You bring me copra, Mæa. Same price always."

Mæa: " No."

He directs his men in native. They lift up the loads of copra they have placed in the copra shed. They stand waiting for his commands. And he tells them to go. They carry off their loads.

Mæa: " Missionary tell bring you no more copra. Mæa obey."

And he turns to go. But Case's voice makes him turn back. Case comes up close to him, his face twisted and evil. Case, softly: " If you go, Mæa, if you take your copra—anywhere else, do you know what will happen? You know that Mister Adams went mad before he ran away, don't you? Do you know why? Shall I tell you? " And softly, insidiously, he speaks in native. And fear steals across Mæa's face . . .

Wiltshire, Uma, and Faavo are making copra in the coconut grove in the sunlight.. Wiltshire and Uma turn their heads as they hear a sudden burst of laughter. Faavo takes no notice, goes on working. Little Jack and a group of grinning native boys are standing some distance off under the palms.

Little Jack: " Never seen a white man sink so low pick his own copra."

Wiltshire seems deaf to Little Jack, works on, never looks round.

Little Jack: " Make his women work too. That's lower'n a bush rat. Make his lady wife slave all day in the sun. Mighty bad! Yes, sah, his *lady wife*, married all neat and holy. By me! "

The native boys laugh their toady laughter.

Little Jack: " Better she stay with Mister Case, but he throw her out when he finish . . . when we all finish, Daddy Randall and me . . ."

A juicy, split coconut hits him square in the mouth.

Wiltshire is standing up, his arm still tensed after the throw of the coconut; and Uma crouches fearfully against the palm tree; and Faavo works without heed; and the native boys, awed and excited, hiss among themselves; and Little Jack slowly wipes the splurge of the coconut away from his mouth.

Wiltshire stands ready and waiting, tensed, eager, with that reckless twist to his lips.

Wiltshire, softly: " Now."

Little Jack looks down at his own great hands, as though in surprise, and clenches them into fists.

Little Jack: " I killed a man once, with mah hands." Then his slowness drops off him, and he comes out fighting, springing on the balls of his feet.

Wiltshire, softly: " Now, scum." Wiltshire comes to meet him. They exchange heavy, cruel blows to the body without giving an inch.

Uma straightens, holds herself taut, backed against the palm tree. The native boys breathlessly inch nearer the fighters.

A blow from Little Jack rocks Wiltshire on his heels. Another blow crashes him on his back. But he springs up and batters in again. At each ramming slam to the body, each pile-driving punch, each jaw-jolting and sledging thump, the native boys cry out

avidly, delightedly, with lust and terror. Little Jack is basted to the ground but comes up flailing.

And Wiltshire is ready for him, Wiltshire snarling and savage, no hero-who-must-win, but a violent and vicious fighter who never thinks of losing.

The native boys gape aghast, grunt and squeal, are dancing on their toes themselves and shadow-thwacking, as Wiltshire hooks and hammers, and the great, wild cudgelling blows of Little Jack black-and-blue the air.

Now the towering negro slows. Wiltshire hurls in two bloody fistfuls, and the splashed, sobbing tower topples. The native boys scream out, come yelling round Wiltshire, seizing his gashed knuckles, waving his hands and their hands, hullabalooing, kicking the fallen tyrant with their bare feet. They dance round Wiltshire, grinning, back-slapping, barbaric children, slippery and gay after a blood bath. Wiltshire's bruised lips part in a smile.

It is almost dark. At the foot of Wiltshire's verandah steps stand two massive native braves. They are both armed. They stand sentinel-still. Wiltshire approaches the bungalow, and stops dead at the sight of the two armed, powerful guards. Still some distance from them, he slips his hand into his hip pocket, brings out a jack-knife, clicks the bright blade open. Slowly, knife in hand, he goes nearer the bungalow, ready for anything, his stride the sprung lope of the hunter.

But when he is quite near them, still standing erect and immobile, they part, so that the verandah steps are clear, and lower their arms. Wiltshire goes up the steps, shielding his open knife. As he moves, a man's voice speaks commandingly in native from the verandah. The two guards go off into the gathering darkness.

Halfway up the steps, Wiltshire sees that, sitting on a shadowy part of the verandah, are Uma and a native. The tip of the native's cigar is glowing. Uma springs to her feet, comes to meet him.

Uma: " Oh, darling, darling, here is Mæa."

She raises her head for him to kiss her. He kisses her lightly, his eyes on the still-shadowed native and the glow of his cigar.

Uma: " He has come to speak to you."

Mæa stands up. He comes forward to meet Wiltshire. He is smiling, and puts out his hand. Wiltshire clicks his jack-knife shut, pockets it, and takes the outstretched hand. The two men shake hands, looking into each other's eyes, sizing each other up . . .

Uma, Wiltshire, and Mæa are at a table on the verandah. A bottle, glasses, and a box of cigars are on the table.

Wiltshire: " You want to trade with me, but you're frightened of Case, that's what it comes down to. Why do you want to trade with me? I'm taboo on the island."

Uma: " Mæa says he is a religious man."

Mæa: " I Bible man. Baptist."

Uma: " The missionary say that Case is wicked. No Bible men to trade with him."

Wiltshire: " Good for Mr. Jenkins. You're the richest man on the island, Mæa, fifty thousand coconuts a year. And you want to take your trade away from Case and give it to me. Case won't like that." To Uma: " Ask him why he's frightened of Case."

Uma speaks in native.

Mæa: " Tiapolo."

Wiltshire, narrow-eyed, turns to Uma: " Uma, what is Tiapolo?"

Uma: " Devil."

Mæa: " Big Devil."

Wiltshire: " How can Case be Tiapolo? "

Uma: " He *belongs* to Tiapolo. He is his son. Anything in the world, Tiapolo make it for him."

Wiltshire: " And you believe that? "

Uma: " I do not know. But he goes into the bush up there. Sometimes he takes the young men with him and shows the devil shining in the trees, and dancing. They hear him talk to Tiapolo. Tiapolo answers. They hear him sing and cry."

Wiltshire, softly: " And they see him shine."

Uma, in surprise: " You have seen him sing and shining? "

Wiltshire, grimly: " I'm going to. Tonight."

Uma rises swiftly and comes to his side, imploringly: " Nobody ever go there but him. He has a church to Tiapolo."

Below the verandah, something stirs in the darkness, the shape of a man listening. Uma's voice continues from above. " Nobody ever but him comes back." Imploringly, " *You must not go. Please, Mister Wiltshire.* In the east of the bush is a place called Fanga-anaana. Oh, never go there. Women devils live there. Beautiful. They have bells they ring, and if a man hears them his bones turn to milk."

Wiltshire: " I'll take care of *them* too, bells and milk and all."

But Uma looks at him entreatingly.

FROM above the wide grove in the moonlight, a stream foams out of the descending galleries and gardens of the tremendous verdurous, impenetrable high interior of the island. Along the narrow, winding path through the grove goes the lithe figure of Wiltshire, bearing a lighted lantern. The path is that on which he saw, from above, Case walking out of the dense eastward bush.

Wiltshire reaches the end of the path where it threads among ferns and flowers and is lost. His rifle is slung over his shoulder. He hears the distant sounding of the sea. He forces his way through the thick moonlit vegetation at the end of the path.

Once within, the moon is put out like a candle by the windy, swarming, dark draperies of vine, the arches of interlacing boughs, convolvulus, and giant creeper. All sound is muffled and swaddled. His lantern goes on, like an eye before him.

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And then he is out again of the thronged and teeming jungle dark, into moonlight and the far but clear sound of the sea. Before him lies a long mound of stones and great boulders, the beginning of an ancient wall stretching out seemingly endlessly.

There are coco palms, mummy apples, sensitivie and guavas. And all about, the high bush; trees going up like the masts of ships, ropes of liana hanging down, orchids growing in the forks of the trees like fungi.

He goes on, soft-footed, wary now, spying around him. On all sides are to be heard faint and stealthy scurries; the newly awoken warnings of little, unseen animals; the prying fingering of gusts of wind from the sea in ferns, leaves, flowers, and shadows. The lantern and the moonlight make the bush all turning shadows that weave to meet him and then spin off, that hover over his head and fly away, huge, birdlike, into deeper inextricable dark. The floor of the bush glimmers with dead wood. The leaves quiver, the great ferns bend and bow, the glimmering deadwood crackles.

And, all at once, he hears a sound of singing on the wind. A high musical ululation that seems to come from many places and many shadows at the same time. The music of the small falling spheres. A wisping and wailing like the tail or wake of a falling rocket. A ghost note rising and swelling and dying away and swelling again. Someone weeping, most beautifully, not of this earth. A harp, glissando'd by drifting leaves and water.

He stops, unslings and cocks his rifle. His eyes range the singing dark, dart this way and that among wavering shadows, weed and creeper, willowing trees, articulate wildness. He takes a few guarded steps forward. Moonlight and lantern-light show the controlled fear on his face, the sweat on his brow. He speaks to himself softly, to keep his courage up by challenging the unknown wailing: Come on, you beautiful woman of Fanga-anaana.

And the single undulating ghost-note is taken up by a score of others. The bush is highly wild with music. Then the wind blows in a sudden gust, and the leaves before him burst open. He sees a face in the middle branches. Then the leaves close. And out of the closed leaves comes the sound of harping, weeping, and singing. He lays down his gun and lantern, clicks his jack-knife open, sticks it between his teeth, and approaches the tree.

Out of the closed leaves comes the sound of harping, weeping, singing. He climbs the tree, thrusting the vegetation aside. The face grins down at him. He climbs and reaches it. And then he laughs. His laughter, relief from pent-up fear, echoes among the wailing voices, mingles with the singing that comes from the face in the mid-branches. He tears the face down from the branches and, holding it, climbs down on to the glimmering deadwood-littered ground.

The face is a square box, with the face painted on one side. Banjo strings are stretched across the open end of the box. Wiltshire strums his fingers across the strings, then ties the strings of

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the Aeolian harp on to his belt, picks up gun and lantern, and moves on. As he moves, so, every now and then, a puff of wind plays on the hanging face.

He reaches deep undergrowth. Here he has to force his way through, plying his knife as he goes, slicing the cords of liana, slashing down the great weeds. And still the other harps sing all around him in the trees. He struggles through undergrowth into a clearing.

In the clearing stands a high, druidical pile of ancient stones. And beyond it, a path. The path is very narrow, but well-beaten. He follows it and then stops dead. In front of him is a wall, tumbledown, very old, big-bouldered. The wall faces him, and along the top of it is a line of figures. They are little less than man-size and lurch and bob in the wind. The hidden harps sing as, cautiously, he approaches them. They have hideous carved and painted faces and shudder and twitch as if pulled by strings. Their limbs work with the tugging of the wind. Their eyes and teeth are made of shell. Their straw hair and their tribal garments blow in his face.

Suddenly Wiltshire jerks back with a start. A night bird silently dives down past him and tears at the hair of one of the figures lurching and bobbing there. Then, as Wiltshire moves, the bird flies off with a sharp single shriek.

And Wiltshire knocks the figures off the wall, tears off their clothes and hair, breaks the backs of them, rends their doll limbs, grinds their teeth and eyes under his heels. He knocks down and destroys figure after figure, all in a rage with them and his own now-forgotten fear. But the last figure on the wall, a fat and grinning woman with a tattooed face, he slings, intact, over his shoulder.

He goes on, the wind harping the face he carries at his waist, the idol over his shoulder dancing. And, as he goes along the narrow, hindered path, snapping and cracking plants and branches aside, other hideous faces confront him, faces of figures cunningly hidden, cunningly fixed in the branches, so that at a touch they lollop forward, drunken and askew, grinning and trying to fondle. These he tears down ferociously.

Idols hang gibbeted from trees, their long clothes blow across his face, blinding him, their sickening painted grins fly on to his mouth. He knifes them down, slits and kicks them into the bush. He goes on through the peopled bush. Now an arm with a taloned hand hangs from a bough, and he tears it down. Other dismembered limbs sway from tree-forks. He cuts them down with a fierce loathing, and slits them along so that their padding of grass and rushes trails out of them. On a tree are painted two great slit eyes. He hacks his way on through this butcher's shop of the bush, and then . . . he vanishes into the ground.

One moment he is hacking his way in fury—the next he is gone. The glimmering deadwood floor has swallowed him up.

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From the man-high trap, into which he has fallen, comes a terrible squeaking, wailing, and hissing, hundreds of little voices. Wiltshire struggles and scrabbles in the dug pit. By the light of his dropped lantern, he sees that he is treading on a pool of little faces. He snatches up a handful of the faces. They are painted on balloons; balloons which, as he treads on them, let out air with a succession of squeaks and whistling grunts.

Clutching gun, lantern, and his handful of balloons, the idol figure lurching over his shoulder, he scrambles out of the pit. Once on the ground again, he pockets the balloons and goes at a rush through the bush. Now he reaches a long mound of earth, like a cromlech. The mound is at the edge of the path, which winds across the top of a sharp decline. He kicks away the earth.

With a cry, a head bounces out of the earth. But this time he is not startled. Quickly he grabs the head by the hair and drags it out. It is the head of a released jack-in-the-box, though unchildishly large and ghastly. He kicks it to pieces. And he kicks away the rest of the earth to find a tarpaulin sheet stretched across boards.

He looks around him, then at the sharp decline below the path. Rapidly he climbs down the decline and comes to the mouth of a cave. The roof of the cave is the tarpaulined boarding.

He goes into the cave. Rounding a corner, he brings, all of a sudden, his rifle to his shoulder. Then, after a moment, he walks warily on. In front of him, hanging from the roof of the cave is a skeleton. It is the skeleton of a full-grown man, but its face is monstrous. The face shines brilliantly. The brilliance waxes and dwindles, waxes and dwindles. Occasionally smoke floats out of it. Wiltshire brings his lantern nearer the skeleton. Then with a harsh intake of breath, he bends down, the light of the lantern playing on the swaying legs and feet. One of the feet is clubbed.

Wiltshire, to himself, in a whisper: "Clubfoot! So this is where you vanished, Johnny Adams.". He cuts the rope from which the skeleton hangs, and lays it gently down on the floor of the cave. He covers the lurid, luminous face with his handkerchief.

Wiltshire: "Lie still now."

Wiltshire is going on again. The voices in the trees are still wailing. His stride is longer, easier, his whole poise less wary. He reaches a part of the bush where branches knit and knot darkly and inextricably over the path, putting out the moon. Out of the darkness a woman walks towards him.

He stops, as though frozen. He cannot raise his gun. He cannot move. The woman walks swiftly towards him, and the little high-voiced bells begin to ring. Wiltshire cries out. The woman is nearly on top of him. And then she speaks in an urgent voice: "Put out the lantern. It is me, Uma. Put it out."

Wiltshire puts out the lantern and, sighing with relief, moves as though to catch hold of her, but her urgency stops him still.

Uma: "Case is come. He is near in the bush. I heard him."

Again he moves towards her.

Uma, whispering: "No. Do not move. He will hear you. Faavo saw Little Jack outside the house tonight. He listened to you saying you would go find Tiapolo. Faavo saw him run to Case. She saw Case come up the path with a big gun."

Wiltshire, whispering: "Come along." He takes her hand. Very softly they pad along the dark path, stray moonlight sieving through the laced leaves overhead. A gust of wind draws a wailing note from the box-harp at his waist. The idol figure lurches on his shoulder. With a tiny, muted cry, Uma presses closer to him.

Then, without warning, the dark, cavernous, cathedral-like arch of trees comes to an end, and Wiltshire and Uma are in bright moonlight. There is a flash and the screech of a bullet.

Uma pitches forward with a cry. Wiltshire flings himself forward beside her on the ground. Cautiously he raises himself on his elbows and bends over her. She lies crumpled up on one side.

Wiltshire, in an agonised whisper: "Uma, darling." She turns her head slowly and smiles up at him through tears of pain.

Wiltshire: "Where? Where?"

She touches herself, very slowly and gently, above her left breast. Then her eyes close though she is still smiling. Wiltshire's face is vicious. He smiles too, but like an animal full of hate. His teeth are bared as though in a smile, but his hard eyes are shining.

Wiltshire, gently: "I'll get him, Uma. Smile at me, Uma. That's right. Smile all the time at me. Smile." His voice is soft and low, and full of a kind of wheedling affection: the voice one uses to humour a child. And as he says the words, very cautiously he is crawling away from her towards the part of the bush from where the bullet came, to where Case is lurking.

Wiltshire: "Don't worry, Uma. I'll get him. Always smile at me, Uma. I love you."

And with a sudden spring, he flings himself at the sheltering protection of the bush at the side of the path. But as he springs there is another flash and report and the scream of a bullet.

The bullet catches him in mid-spring, throws him sideways in the air. And his rifle, also, is flung in the air and falls near the lying-down, crumpled figure of Uma. Wiltshire is face downwards on the earth. Gingerly he slides his hand down his leg. His hand stops. He slides it up to his eyes. It is soaked in blood.

Very slowly, Wiltshire snake-bellies his way towards Uma and the rifle. Then he tenses into stillness. Some little distance away there is the crack of a foot on brushwood. Case's head appears, white in the moonlight, over a wild wall of tall ferns. He raises his Winchester, levels it, fires.

Wiltshire squirms aside and is still. There is a dead stillness and silence.

Then Case comes out of the ferns, his gun smoking. And as he comes out, spry, soft-footed, he laughs.

He comes up to Wiltshire, Wiltshire twisted and inert on the ground. And, behind Wiltshire, Uma crumpled in her white clothes. He comes very close to Wiltshire. And Wiltshire, with one galvanic movement, plucks the feet from under him.

Case falls cruelly and awkwardly, his rifle jerked out of his hands. His body thuds on the ground, and Wiltshire is on top of him.

Wiltshire: " Go on laughing. Smile at me, Uma. Laugh at me, Case."

His knife is open in his hand. Case fastens his teeth in his forearm, but Wiltshire heeds nothing. He does not attempt to shake off the weasel-like hold of Case's teeth. Wiltshire stabs Case in the body.

Wiltshire: " For Johnny Adams." And he stabs him again. " For Uma! "

Case twitches and lies still. Wiltshire rolls off him. He props himself up and bends over Case. Case's eyes are shut. But he speaks in the ghost of his dry, precise, mocking voice, slowly: " I did what evil I could. I should have been a politician. There is more scope. Is Uma dead? "

Wiltshire does not answer, stares down at the thin, bitterly twisted dying lips and the shut eyes.

Case: " I wanted to make a clean sweep of you all tonight. It was my birthday. I wanted to kill you and Uma and Little Jack and Daddy Randall. Old friends—all of you. I poisoned Daddy's drink before leaving. I hope he shares the bottle with Little Jack. I think he will. He was always a generous man. Did I tell you it was my birthday today? I keep forgetting. Do you know how old I am? "

The thin twisted lips stiffen and then sag. Silence and stillness. Wiltshire stares close at the dead face.

Wiltshire: " You're very old now."

And a sudden wind sets the harp voices wailing. Wiltshire turns, crawling away.

There is a noise of voices and of feet crushing the underwood. The missionary, followed by Mæa, comes through the bush, leading a party of men.

The missionary is leading the men down through the bush above Falesa towards the village. Below can be seen the night fires of Falesa. Beyond them, the sounding sea. Uma is being carried on a litter of branches. Wiltshire is limping along, supporting himself against one of Mæa's braves, and Mæa himself is bearing sack-wise over his shoulder the dead body of Case.

The party comes out of the bush by Case's bungalow. The bearers carry Uma on towards the village. Mæa, followed limpingly by Wiltshire and his supporting native, walks up the verandah steps, Case over his shoulder. He flings the door open.

In the trading-room, where a lit lamp hangs from the roof, Little Jack and Captain Randall sit at the table, their heads sunken. On the table in front of them is a half-empty bottle and two glasses. Also on the table, directly before them, are their two fiddles, the bows by the side. At the top of the table there is one unoccupied chair. And on the table in front of that chair lies Case's concertina.

Mæa comes into the room, followed by Wiltshire and his attendant. Mæa slumps Case down into the unoccupied chair directly facing the concertina. The three dead men sit before their instruments. Wiltshire stands at the door.

Wiltshire, slowly: " You wouldn't think they were dead. You'd think they were going to play."

He stares at the three dead men and the fiddles and the concertina.

The missionary, Mæa, Wiltshire, and his attendant walk towards Wiltshire's bungalow where Uma is lying in bed in the living-room. The missionary bandages her shoulder. She is smiling. Wiltshire bends down over her.

The stars of the night fires are burning in the village. As though from the inside of Case's bungalow, comes the gay music of fiddles and concertina.

And beyond the bungalow, the gay music continues to the beach of Falesa.

© Viking Films Inc. 1963

The full version of The Beach of Falesa will be published in book form by Jonathan Cape

SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD (JULY ISSUE)

Across. 1, *Baseball.* 5, *Eagles.* 9, *Dismount.* 10, *Chopin.* 12, *Immediate.* 14, *Roach.* 15, *Mar.* 16, *Wallop.* 19, *Elvan.* 22, *Tapir.* 23, *Sheath.* 25, *Pat.* 28, *Lento.* 29, *Early worm.* 32, *Tricks.* 33, *Disagree.* 34, *Oddity.* 35, *Wet-nurse.*

Down. 1, *Bodkin.* 2, *Sesame.* 3, *Broad.* 4, *Linda.* 6, *Abhorrent.* 7, *Lipsalve.* 8, *Sunshine.* 11, *Temple.* 13, *Ill.* 17, *Air-pocket.* 18, *Listen.* 20, *Stiletto.* 21, *Open mind.* 24, *Awl.* 26, *Pourer.* 27, *Ampere.* 30, *Raise.* 31, *Yearn.*

SOLUTION TO TEN MINUTE CROSSWORD (PAGE 167)

ACROSS. 1, Rampage. 7, Neater. 8, Mistral. 9, Stew. 10, Long. 12, Aground. 14, Resolve. 16, Toga. 18, Mice. 20, Torpedo. 21, Fierce. 22, Disdain.

DOWN. 1, Rambler. 2, Mason. 3, Acre. 4, Enlarge. 5, Passport. 6, Severn. 11, Geometry. 12, Averted. 13, Dragoon. 15, Elicit. 17, Opera. 19, Arms.

SOLUTION TO THE PUZZLE ON PAGE 19

Fourteen men; twelve women.

Leisure-Pleasure

There's more to relaxation than meets the eye. Try our way—brushing the sun with wine, food, books, music, and a car to take you places . . .

SOME thirty miles to the east of the vine-clad slopes of Burgundy, the country of the Côte d'Or, is another range of hills much less well known to the traveller in France. These hills are part of the Jura, and like those of Burgundy are covered with vines. Pliny mentioned the wines of this region, while they graced the tables of Charles V of Spain and Francis I of France. Yet only since 1945 have they become known in Britain.

Jura wines claim to be different from any others, and it is certainly true, both as regards colour and flavour. They are made mainly from four grapes: Poulsard for rose wines, Trousseau for full-bodied red, Savagnin for the yellow wines with a walnut flavour, and Chardonnay d'Arbois for the white.

Anyone drinking Jura wines for the first time might do well to start on the robust Marnebour Rouge, and its companion, the dry Marnebour Rosé. A bottle costs about 10s.

There is also a Marnebour Blanc, but for those who like a really delicate white wine, there is the Blanc de Blancs, Côtes du Jura. It has a nutty bouquet characteristic of the region's wines and costs about 11s.

As the lovely little town of Arbois is the centre of the Jura wine industry, so is Monsieur Henri Maire the owner of the largest estates, his Françoise de Monfort vineyard being the biggest in the region. His talented wife designs the labels for his wines and plays no little part in advertising them. One of the several Henri Maire wines is the Rosé d'Arbois, a wine of notable charm which in 1955 won the Grand Prix de la Qualité Française. It costs about 13s. here. From the same château comes the old French-bottled Rosé, Pelure d'Oignon d'Arbois, full of character, and about 13s. a bottle.

The Jura is also the home of that remarkable Grand Vin Jaune Château-Chalon. Pale golden, it is like an unfortified

fino sherry and should be drunk when chilled, as an aperitif. Made from a special grape, Savagnin, it is reputed to have a longer life than any other wine and it is quite common to find it half a century old in the restaurants of Arbois, Dole and Champagnole. It is matured in wood for six years before being bottled—one of the reasons why it costs about 32s. a bottle.

Remarkable also is the Grand Vin de Paille du Jura. For several months after picking, the grapes are dried in straw until they look like raisins. The rich syrup pressed from them is fermented very slowly and the wine remains in the cask for ten years before bottling. It can be compared only with Imperial Tokay, with an underlying flavour of quinces. To drink it after dinner is a memorable experience, which makes the price of some 36s. a bottle seem of no consequence whatsoever.

Asher Storey and Co., of 127 Lower Thames Street, London, E.C.3., can supply a list of Jura wine stockists, who include Kettners of Soho; Field's of Sloane Avenue, Chelsea; Sainsbury Brothers of Bath; Innes Smith and Co., of Birmingham; Roderick Mackenzie of Glasgow; and Alastair Campbell of Edinburgh.

In the larder, the egg can be man's best friend. If unexpected guests appear, a few hard-boiled eggs kept for emergencies will offer salvation. There is no end to the versatility of the egg—omelets, soufflés, savouries, main courses, desserts. Even tinned clear soup is turned into something epicurean if a poached egg is carefully placed in each soup bowl before the soup is poured over it. But for something more substantial try:

EGGS A LA KING:

Three hard-boiled eggs; a small can of condensed mushroom soup; two tablespoons of sherry; three or four sliced mushrooms; a sweet pepper, diced; a little onion juice; grated cheese; salt and cayenne pepper to taste.

Grease a casserole. Slice the eggs. Mix the onion juice, sherry and soup together. Place a layer of eggs in the casserole. Add a few sliced mushrooms, some of the diced peppers and then some of the soup mixture. Alternate these layers, ending with the soup. Sprinkle with grated cheese, season and place in a medium oven (gas, No. 4; electric, 350 degrees). Bake for an hour.

SCOTCH EGGS:

Four hard-boiled eggs; half a pound of Wall's pork sausage meat; a tablespoon of flour seasoned with salt and pepper; a few drops of Lea and Perrins Worcester Sauce; fresh (or a packet of) breadcrumbs; one raw beaten egg.

Shell the eggs and roll in the seasoned flour. Add the Worcester sauce to the sausage meat and cover each egg with the sausage. Brush over with the beaten egg and roll in breadcrumbs. Preheat deep fat or oil until a very faint smoke is rising from it and cook fairly slowly until the eggs are golden brown all over. Drain on kitchen paper and serve either hot or cold.

STUFFED EGGS:

Four hard-boiled eggs; one tin of sardines or a small tin of salmon; one teaspoon of grated onion; one tablespoon of butter or margarine; salt and pepper; a teaspoon of lemon juice.

Cut the eggs in half; put the yolks, with the sardines or the salmon and the rest of the ingredients into a large bowl, and beat together well. Pile this mixture into the hollow halves of the egg, and serve on a bed of lettuce with sliced tomatoes, cucumber, and capers to garnish.

'So much for hard-boiled eggs. Here's a new sort of recipe.

BREAD AND CHEESE OMELET:

Four raw eggs (for two people); two thickish slices of white bread, cut into little cubes; two-and-a-half ounces of butter; one tablespoon of milk; salt and pepper; grated cheese.

Fry the cubes of bread in two ounces of the butter and keep them hot. Put the remaining half ounce of butter to melt in the omelet pan. Beat the eggs with the milk and seasoning, and

pour gently into the pan. Add the fried cubes of bread while the eggs are still liquid, and cook over a medium heat until the omelet is set.

Serve sprinkled with grated cheese.

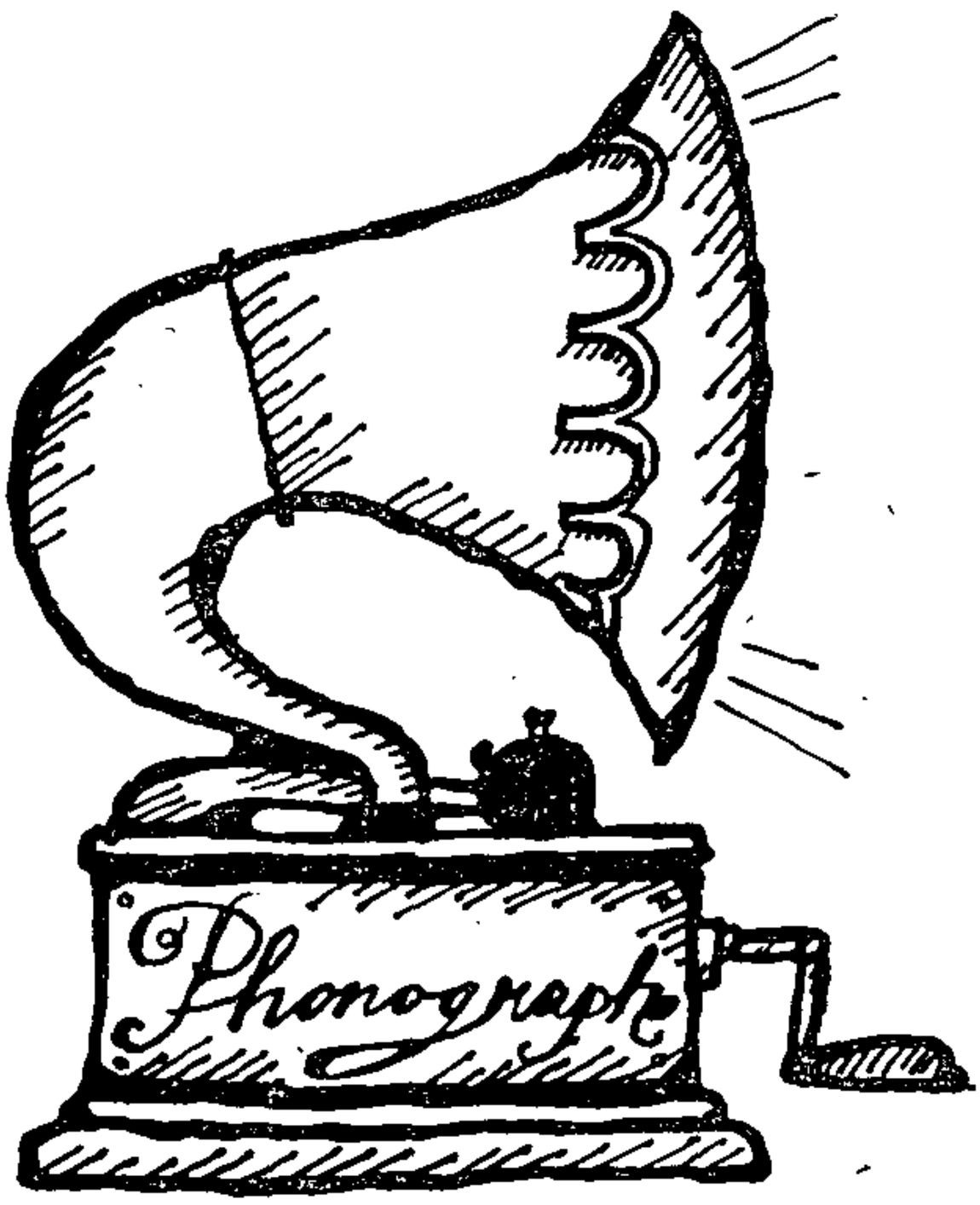
And now for a look at new books and records.

"The biggest personality I have ever met was not a person but a place, a plot of land bounded by a Lane, a Long Acre, a Churchyard and a Strand. It has been known as Frère Pye's Garden, the Covent Garden, Coven Garden and the Common Garden. But most Londoners call it, short and sweet, 'The Garden.'"

So opens the year's most outstanding book which is being published some time this month, *London Has A Garden* by that amazing woman Clemence Dane, painter, sculptor, dramatist and novelist.

It is the story of those few hundred unique acres where ballet is danced exquisitely, opera sung proudly, and heavy lorries carrying vegetables jockey for position with the barrows loaded with fruit and flowers in the narrow jammed streets. The market which is so soon to be banished.

And what a story it is; immensely readable, scholarly, brimming with little-known histories of actors, painters, dramatists, dancers, poets, musicians working there happily today, as well as much that is rare about the once-famous men and women whose ghosts may well haunt the garden of the Inigo Jones Church.



It is right and proper Clemence Dane should be the one to tell this story. She loved the place and lived there for many years in an absurd flat overlooking the market itself. Absurd for the ground floor of the old building was used by a fruit and vegetable buyer and had the earthy smell and begrimed appearance of its kind.

An uncarpeted and probably unsound stair led up to a door which opened on to a different world of bright colours and lovely things, and here Clemence Dane lived and worked for many years, loving every moment of it.

This is a book you'll want to keep.

About the most frightening book that's come this way in months is *Shadows In The Sea* the work of three men, Harold W. McCormick, Tom Allen, and Captain William Young.

The awesome subject is sharks; sharks, skates and rays.

Sharks are especially to be avoided—not only are they savage flesh-eaters, but, say the authors, any idea you may have that they are at heart cowards—to be frightened away by such ploys as thrashing around in the water or slashing away at the backs of their necks with knives—is a myth and not to be relied on.

There are all sorts of fascinating details. For instance, a shark faced with a choice of prey, such as an upset boatload, has the unexplained idiosyncrasy of marking out one special victim. All others are then ignored while this marked man is skilfully pursued, cut out and cornered, until his ultimate gloomy end.

A creature of considerable size, this man-eating monster will swim fearlessly into quite shallow sea, so at the traditional warning cry of "Shark! Shark!" you would still do well to leave the water! An unusual, informative, and extremely exciting book.

Not least among the enjoyment offered by *Remember Me To Tom*, the memoirs of Tennessee Williams' mother, is the great man himself photographed when but a curly-haired, big-open-eyed cherub of a child. Who, but who, could have guessed that this pretty babe would one day become famous, and rightly so, with plays about "Murder, cannibalism, castration, madness, incest, rape, adultery, nymphomania, homosexuality," to quote his mother. "There exists no savage act about which my son has not written. Yet his plays are filled with beauty. And they offer truth, truth that many of us do not like to face."

Edwina Dakin Williams has told of her own life, and combined with it the biography and many early letters of her son. Of how "Tom" became "Tennessee"; of his violent, drink-loving father; and his sweetly pretty, sick-minded sister, so like Laura in *The Glass Menagerie*, the play that exploded him into success.

Enjoyable but faintly embarrassing, like so many books in the American let's-tell-it-all idiom.

This month's thriller quota includes a new Mary Stewart, *This Rough Magic*. The author holds the unique honour of being one of the few Britishers to appear regularly on the

American Top Ten author list, and this, her latest, is certain to rocket up everywhere it's published.

Records this month, are mostly Strauss to mark Strauss' Centenary. Surprising, is the enormous range of musical ideas covered by this amazing man. Decca have produced a new *Lieder* album, with Herman Prey, singing in German, skilfully accompanied by Gerald Moore; Deutsche Grammophon has a new recording of *Arabella*, his sixth and last opera in which there is some of the most heavenly music Strauss ever wrote.

There is a large choice of his incomparable, evocative *Heldenleben*, among which the old Beecham version still stands high—but then Beecham always *did* love full-blooded music.

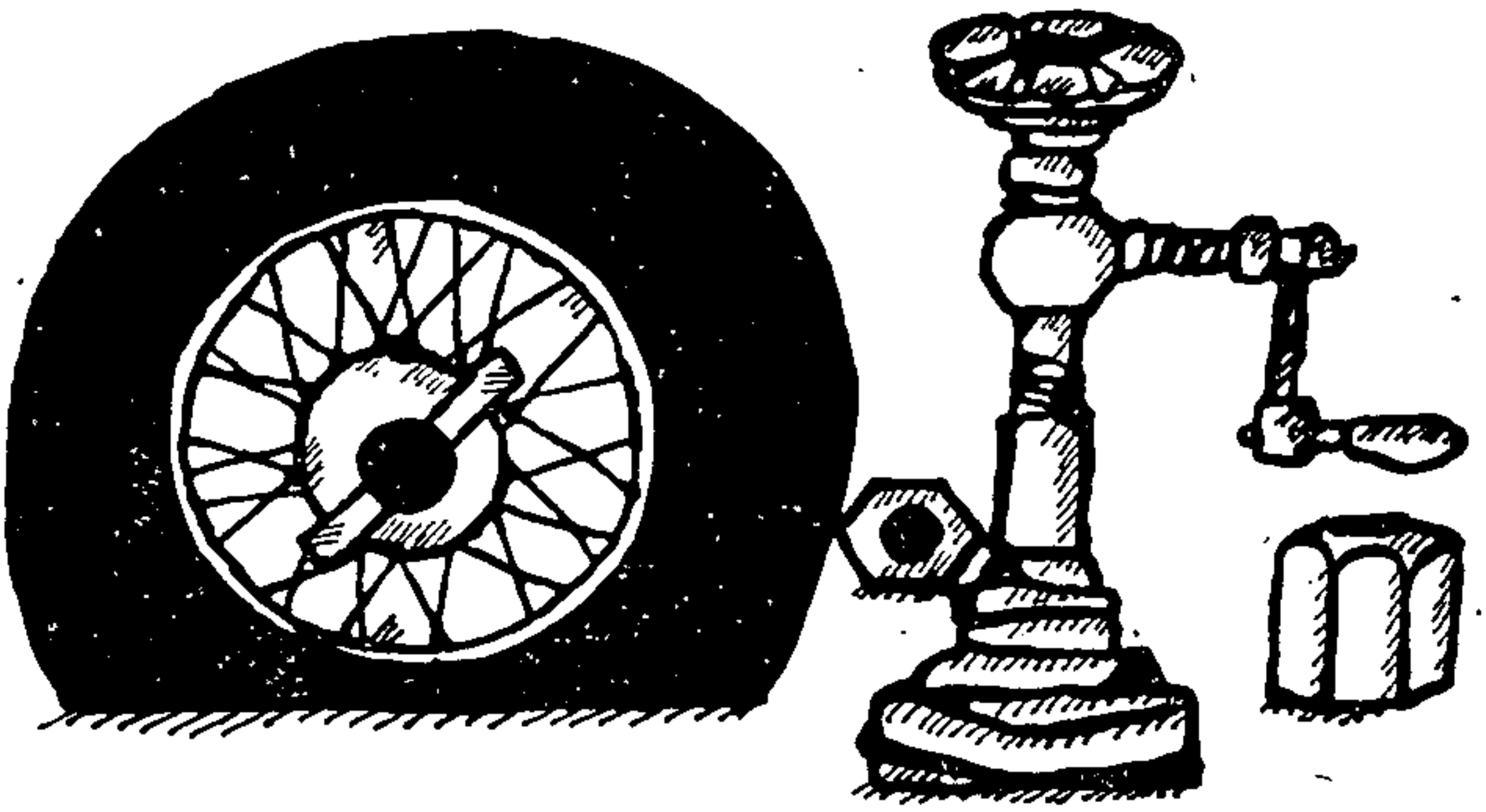
A joy to possess is the gay-hearted *Capriccio* which has been on the Glyndebourne programme this summer. Our choice is the Schwarzkopf and Fischer-Dieskah set.

Pleasing too is the more intimate, less demanding music made by Julian Bream, this time with a lute in place of his guitar. He is playing *Dowland*, the Elizabethan dances with such delectable names as *Mrs. White's Nothinge*; *Mrs. Vaux's Gigge*; *Forlone Hope Fancy* and *My Ladye Hunsdon's Puffe*.

Lastly, Keith Fletcher in a Spitfire!

Strange how one matures, I thought, pulling on a pair of string-back driving gloves and slipping behind the wheel. Was it only last week that I had passed sour comments on the mad fool in the sleek little red Spitfire? Now as I sat in one myself I knew that he was merely bubbling over with the sheer fun of driving, because this is what Standard Triumph's most recent sports car, the Spitfire, does to you.

The Spitfire is fun, with the sun shining and the wind in your hair. Traffic wardens and Sunday drivers become unimportant.



It's a car in which to search out the undiscovered by-ways, the twists and turns just emphasising its excellent handling qualities. And with lively acceleration, full use can be made of any short straight stretch of road. For fast point to point motoring, you have a 90 m.p.h. plus maximum and brakes to match. Even driving hard, the needle on the fuel gauge moves very slowly—a gallon being good for thirty-four miles or so.

Comfort-lovers are quite well catered for, too. The weather-proof hood fits snugly and the heater is very effective. I first tried the Spitfire in the awful winter at the beginning of 1963 in order to photograph it. I put the hood down, then got my hands so cold that I could not put it up again, and was forced to drive through London in the snow with no roof over my head, and no overcoat either! But with the windows wound up and the heater at full blast, the only discomfort was the un-believing looks from other motorists. The hood, in fact, is fairly easy to erect or stow away, once you become used to it. Parking provides no great problem as the Spitfire inherits the Herald's turning circle—the Spitfire's being only 23½ft.

Instrumentation is adequate though the speedometer is largely obscured by the wheel and one's left hand. The rev counter further to the left is quite clear. Driving position is good with all the essential equipment falling ready to hand, and the fore and aft movement of the seats should enable the tallest of drivers to adopt the straight arm technique, although his head may poke up a little above the rather low screen. Luggage space is fair by sports car standards, but the space behind the seats unfortunately just will not let an adult fit in.

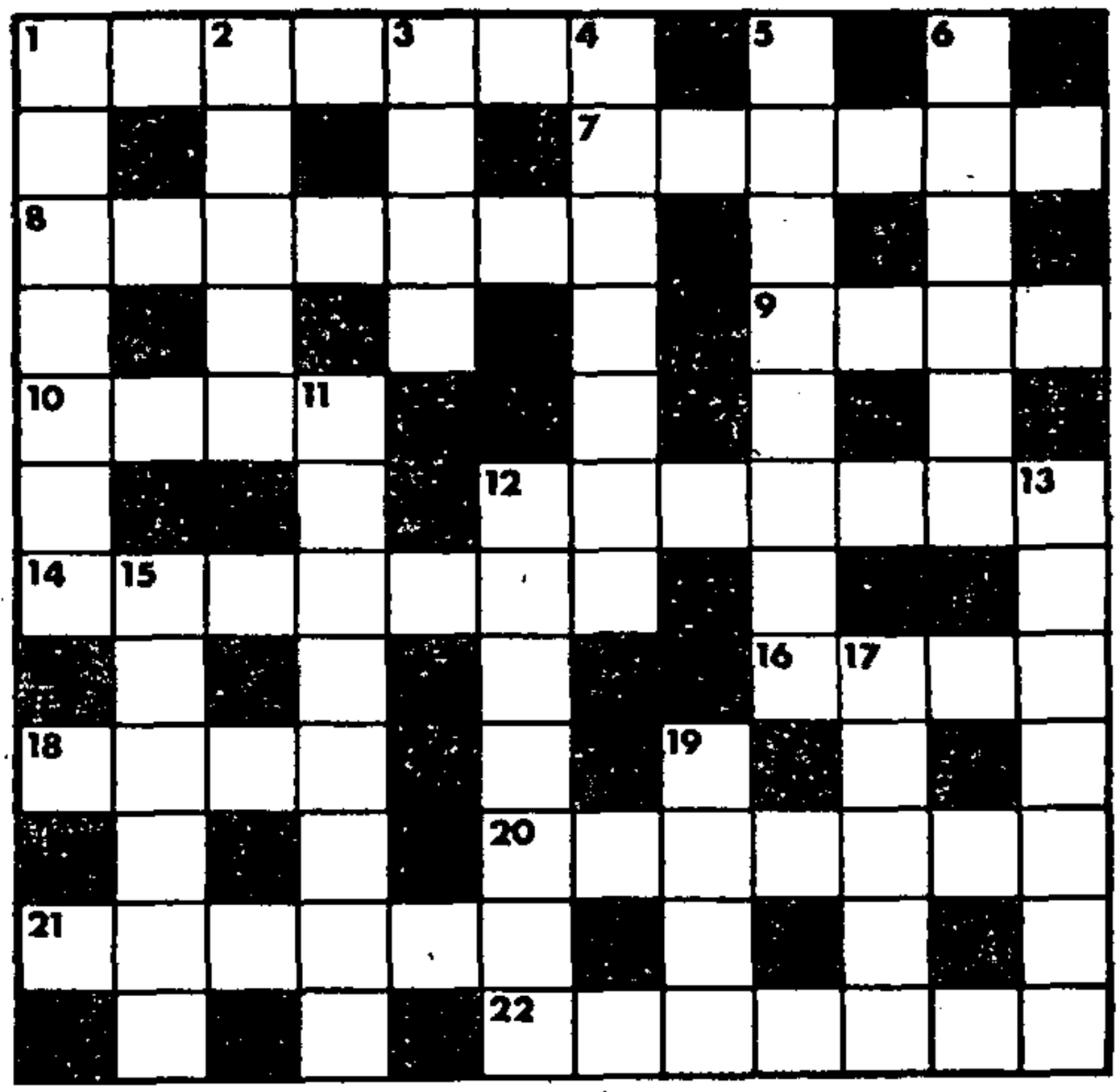
BOOKS REVIEWED:

Clemence Dane, *London Has a Garden* (Michael Joseph 30s.)
Harold W. McCormick, Tom Allen, and Captain William Young, *Shadows in the Sea* (Sidgwick and Jackson 35s.)
Edwina Dakin Williams, *Remember Me to Tom* (Cassell 25s.)
Mary Stewart, *This Rough Magic* (Hodder and Stoughton 18s.)

RECORDS:

Richard Strauss: *Lieder*, Decca SXL 6107 (stereo), LXT 6107 (mono)
Richard Strauss: *Arabella*, Deutsche Grammophon, SLPM 138883/5 (stereo), LPM 18883/5 (mono)
Richard Strauss: *Ein Heldenleben*, E.M.I., ALP 1847 (mono), ASD 421 (stereo)
Richard Strauss: *Capriccio*, Columbia 33CX 1600/2 (mono only)
Julian Bream Plays *Dowland*, H.M.V. CLP 1726 (mono only)

TEN MINUTE CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1 Behave violently (7).
7 More tidy (6).
8 Riviera wind (7).
9 Cook—in a flurry? (4).
10 Yearn (4).
12 Vessel's run to earth! (7).
14 Clear up (7).
16 Classical garment (4).
18 Timid animals (4).
20 Watery missile? (7).
21 Savage (6).
22 Scorn (7).

DOWN

1 Wandering rose (7).
2 Worker in stone (5).
3 Piece of land (4).
4 Increase in size (7).
5 Document to open all doors? (8).
6 Worcester's river (6).
11 This science measures the earth (8).
12 Turned aside (7).
13 Rough fellow (7).
15 Bring forth (6).
17 Musical entertainment (5).
19 Limbs (4).

(Solution on page 159)

WINNER CROSSWORD COMPETITION No. 3

We are pleased to announce that the following reader has been awarded the Sheaffer PFM Pen and Ballpen Set, the prize in our May Competition:

G. A. Christian, Esq., Mannamead, Plymouth, Devon.

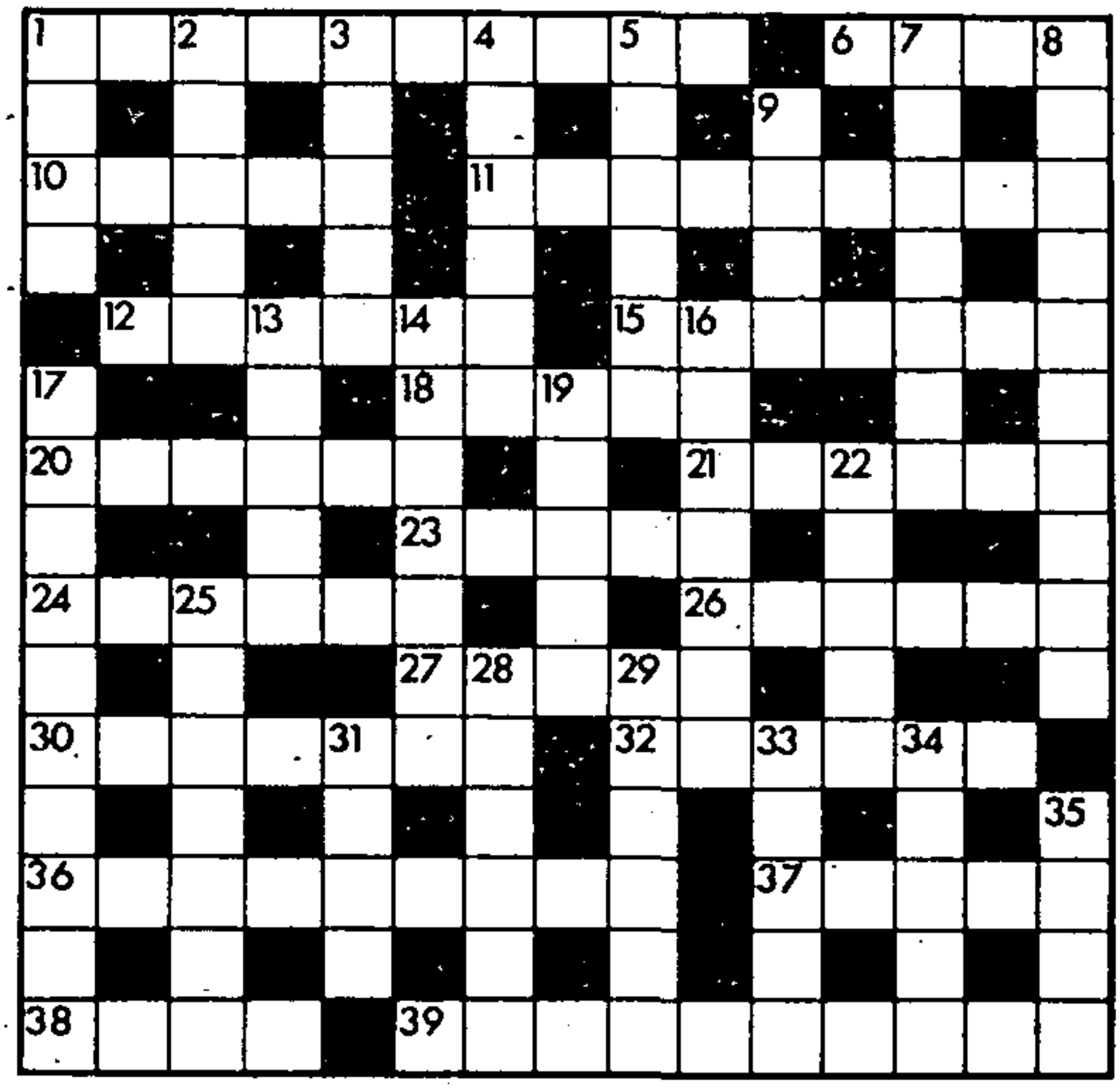
SOLUTION TO PRIZE CROSSWORD NO. 3 (MAY)

ACROSS. 1, *Globe*. 4, *Fan*. 6, *Verdi*. 9, *Elder*. 10, *Air* (*Macbeth, I, vi*). 11, *Night*. 12, *Garrick*. 13, *Sisters*. 14, *Dying* (*A & C, I, ii*). 16, *Yea*. 17, *Neats* (*JC, I, i*). 19, *Poles*. 21, *Bed*. 23, *Viola*. 25, *Oratory*. 27, *Marlowe*. 29, *Paris*. 30, *Ear* (*R & J, III, i*). 31, *Lance*. 32, *Sands* (*Tempest, I, ii*). 33, *Fat*. 34, *Meets* (*Othello, IV, ii*).

DOWN. 1, *Gielgud*. 2, *Order*. 3, *Earring*. 4, *Frankly*. 5, *Nerissa*. 6, *Venison*. 7, *Rogue*. 8, *Ictuses*. 15, *Ill*. 18, *Ado*. 19, *Prompts*. 20, *Spouses*. 21, *Bayleaf*. 22, *Demerit*. 23, *Verulam*. 24, *Ageless*. 26, *Aaron*. 28, *Ounce*.

ARGOSY CROSSWORD

Solution next month



ACROSS

1 Dropping a trick whilst balking! (10).

6 Digger's booty? (4).

10 Behind, but to win nevertheless? (2, 3).

11 Top tournament players exercise on this machine? (4-5).

12 Cut short curtsy (6).

15 Slight breeze raises a ripple (4-3).

18 Cathy sails. (5)

20 A hard time for all concerned (3, 3).

21 Surgeon removes head from swelling (6).

23 Show a good bit of leg! (5).

24 A gangster might beat one (6).

26 Hindu stream (6).

27 Jack's living off the fat of the land (5).

30 A bitter concoction that goes to the head (7).

32 Laurel becomes Apollo's favourite girl (6).

36 Am showing skill in verse like a good poet (9).

37 A mule—ridden by Moslem doctors? (5).

38 The same again? Fair enough (2-2).

39 This hobble sorted out the Ephraimites (10).

DOWN

1 Drone gets round some bigwigs (4).

2 Can you beat an alfresco 13? (5).

3 Indian bwana? (5).

4 Red Sea mignonette (6).

5 "—— is silvern" (Carlyle) (6).

7 Fast light tank (7).

8 Young ladies meet reputable novelist (10).

9 Opening of mine (4).

13 Fête full of high spirits? (5).

14 Sight-reading? (3,4).

16 Fabulous huntress leaves state capital (7).

17 One cast in the heroic mould? (10).

19 Tossed pole (5).

22 Is she in her element when air-borne? (5).

25 Thisbe's lover (7).

28 Harp is apt for this county division (6).

29 One qualifies (6).

31 Filled to the rim with old port? (4).

33 Poseidon's brother helped the oil flow (5).

34 She's in French city (5).

35 "Primrose —— of dalliance" (*Hamlet*). (4).

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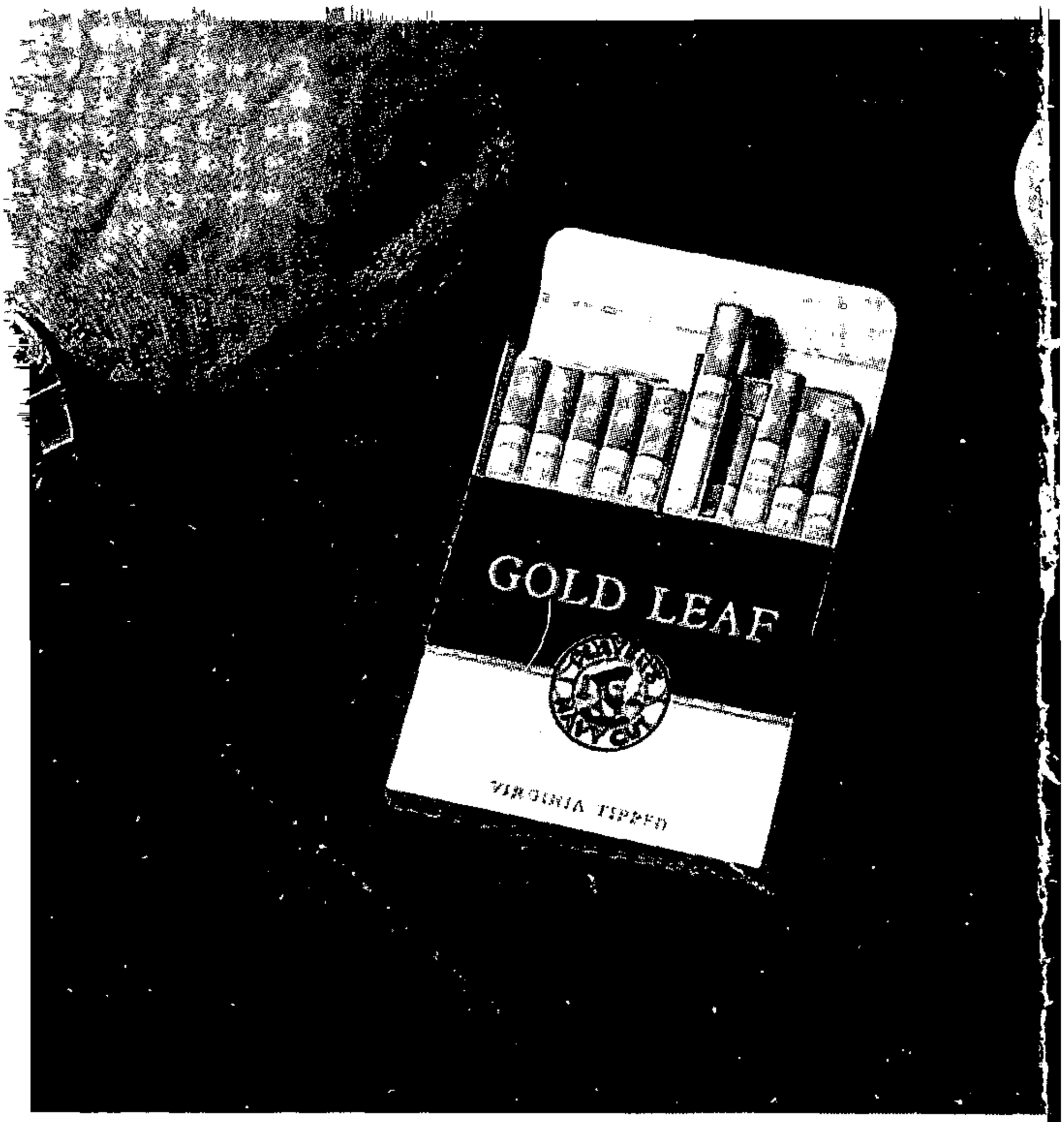

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